REPORT RESUMES

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PREVENTION OF FAILURE.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PREVENTION OF FAILURE IN SCHOOL IS THE MAIN THEME OF THIS PAMPHLET. THE DIFFERENT FORCES WHICH INFLUENCE THE SELF-IMAGES OF CHILDREN, THEIR SCHOOL PERFORMANCE, ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION BY OTHER CHILDREN, AND, MOST IMPORTANT, ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION BY THE TEACHER HERSELF, ARE DISCUSSED IN A GROUP OF PAPERS UNDER ELEVEN TITLES--(1) "WHAT MAY WE NOW BELIEVE," A PLEA FOR INNER-DIRECTED TEACHING WHICH STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE OF EACH INDIVIDUAL CHILD, (2) "REFLECTIONS ON CHILDHOOD IDENTITY AND THE SCHOOL," WHICH ASSERTS THAT THE CHILD'S SENSE OF IDENTITY IS BASED ON HIS POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE IDENTITY WITH HIS TEACHER, (3) "FACILITATING DEVELOPMENT IN THE PRESCHOOL CHILD--SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES," (4) "GROUPING AS A FACTOR IN FAILURE," (5) "EVALUATING CHILDREN'S GROWTH," WHICH URGES EVALUATION OF CHILDREN'S ATTITUDINAL CHANGES AS WELL AS ACADEMIC PROGRESS, (6) "THE EDUCATION OF TEACHERS," WHICH INCLUDES THE SUB-TOPICS OF TEACHER PLACEMENT, IN-SERVICE EDUCATION, AND ADMINISTRATIVE PLANNING, (7) "WHAT HARVEST WILL WE REAP," WHICH SUGGESTS THAT A POSITIVE CLIMATE AND INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION PROMOTE INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT, (8) "PARENTS CAN HELP PREVENT SCHOOL FAILURE," (9) "IMPLICATIONS FOR PARENT EDUCATION," WHICH STRESSES PARENT CONFERENCES AND PARENT SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN'S LEARNING, (10) "THE SCHOOL WITHIN THE COMMUNITY," AND (11) "TOWARD A PROGRAM TO PREVENT FAILURE," A CHECKLIST OF QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED IN EVALUATING ANY PARTICULAR SCHOOL. A BIBLIOGRAPHY IS ALSO INCLUDED. THIS DOCUMENT IS AVAILABLE FOR $1 FROM NEA, 1201 SIXTEENTH STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036. (MS)

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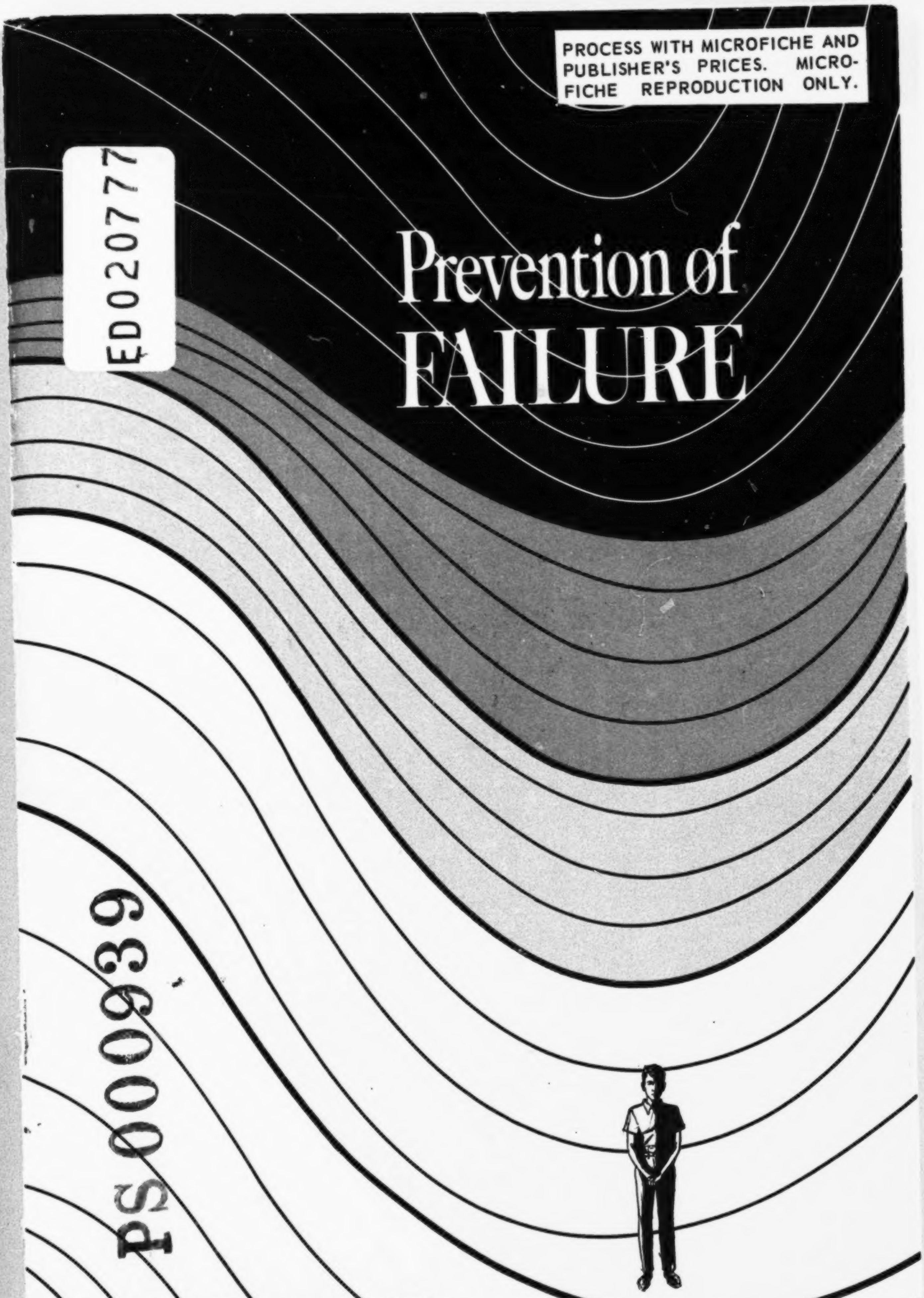

Prevention of FAILURE

PS 000939

Department of Elementary-Kindergarten-Nursery Education

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Contents

Preface 4

Introduction 5

Earl C. Kelley WHAT MAY WE NOW BELIEVE? 7

Donald McNassor REFLECTIONS ON CHILDHOOD IDENTITY AND THE SCHOOL 16

Martin Deutsch FACILITATING DEVELOPMENT IN THE PRESCHOOL CHILD: SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES 33

Maurice J. Eash GROUPING AS A FACTOR IN FAILURE 42

Thomas A. Shellhammer and Ruth B. Love EVALUATING CHILDREN'S GROWTH 48

Docia Zavitkovsky THE EDUCATION OF TEACHERS 54

Ruth French WHAT HARVEST WILL WE REAP? 61

Ralph G. Eckert PARENTS CAN HELP PREVENT SCHOOL FAILURE 69

Ethel Kawin IMPLICATIONS FOR PARENT EDUCATION 76

Sybil Richardson THE SCHOOL WITHIN THE COMMUNITY 85

Frank W. Fertschneider TOWARD A PROGRAM TO PREVENT FAILURE 89

BIBLIOGRAPHY 93

Preface

This bulletin was prepared at the request of the Publications Committee of the Department of Elementary-Kindergarten-Nursery Education of the National Education Association. A group of California educators formed a planning committee to draft plans for the bulletin.

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Introduction

Public interest in the United States has long focused upon the problem of educational failure. With the development of technology, new concerns were expressed about those who, because of limited schooling, were unable to contribute to an industrial economy. More recently, analysis of the extent of poverty in the midst of affluence and the realization that inadequate education leads to social disorders have centered new emphasis on the prevention of school failure.

Research has accumulated detailed information about those students who leave school early. In general, the school dropout is found to be characterized by negative attitudes toward learning and by limited verbal or linguistic ability. He perceives himself as one who is inept and slow. He often comes from a family which, because of the educational deprivation of the parents, places little value upon education. Children from such backgrounds, frequently referred to as socioeconomically deprived or educationally disadvantaged, have recently been the object of intensive study. These studies suggest that the effects of deprivation are not easily reversible; efforts to compensate for educational disadvantages are far more successful when planned early rather than late in the child's life. At the same time the evidence is abundant that potential school failures can be predicted and that during the early school years future school dropouts can be identified. Although children actually drop out of school at about age sixteen, this later failure rests squarely with the elementary school.

In some schools, emphasis has been placed upon uniform standards of achievement which ignore the differences among children. Standardized learning activities have been assigned which disregard the diversity in children's motivations, interests, and family backgrounds. While children identified as educationally disadvantaged may be given certain enriching and compensatory experiences, they are frequently placed in groups labeled as slow. Through their families and their teachers, children perceive that little is or can be expected of them. School policy often dictates that children in these groups cannot receive high grades. A few study trips to museums or other community centers cannot offset the discouragement and injury to a child's concept of himself as a respected person and as a competent learner.

The first three sections of this bulletin focus upon the nature of the learner and the environmental influences which determine his success or failure. In following sections the implications of these general principles for specific school practices are discussed. The rescue of children from predictable school failure requires a critical examination of the school's grouping and evaluation procedures, the selection and education of teachers, the interpersonal relations of teachers and students, and the interaction of schools with parents and the community. The prevention of failure in the elementary school is based upon a broad philosophical issue: Are the purposes of American education served by offering less education and by educating fewer people or should the public school in a democratic society discover and develop the full potential of all people?

Sometimes in the face of parental indifference and detrimental community influences, teachers feel discouraged and helpless. But day-by-day experiences in the classroom and the wider educational environment the community affords have a powerful impact upon children's educational attitudes and aspirations.

Within the teacher's control are decisions which drastically affect each child's psychological well-being. If the teacher interprets authority as reasonable and intelligent rather than arbitrary and emotional, the child gains a sense of an orderly, rational universe. He becomes more confident in the use of his intelligence in solving a wide variety of problems.

The teacher is in complete control of the dosage of success and failure which each child receives each day. Selection of learning activities and materials determines whether a child builds a bank account of success against which to draw in the future or whether he faces a deficit of inevitable failure day after day. The teacher's judgment has immediate impact upon the child's concept of himself as a learner and his feeling of being capable or incompetent. Consciously or unconsciously the child thinks: Who can know better than the teacher whether I am bright or dumb? Although they may often be quite erroneous, early estimates of ability reflected to the child have a lasting effect.

The teacher's arrangements can facilitate or prevent children from knowing and liking one another. In certain classrooms, children have many opportunities to see one another in a favorable and helpful role. Children are helped to perceive a wide range of talents and worthwhile characteristics in members of the class. In others, only a few children are able to earn the teacher's and the group's approval.

This bulletin takes the position that the school, through focusing its efforts on the systematic prevention of failure, can make a significant difference in the future of children.

What May We Now Believe?

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The usual way to start a book is to devote the first chapter to the changing social scene and our changing culture. Often there is a good deal of "viewing with alarm." While some of the facets are indeed frightening, this approach does not seem to be very effective. Our society and culture seem completely indifferent to alarm.

It might be more effective to start off with a series of statements concerning education and life on which we may be able to agree. These could give us something on which to hang other ideas and techniques. If these statements are true as of now, what other ideas are consistent with them? What ways of operating are therefore suggested?

I propose to set forth here a series of 12 statements which seem as near to the truth as I can get at this time. I have tried to arrange them in a more or less logical order.

This list of statements could be called a set of beliefs. The word *belief*, however, is a tricky one, and since I will use it in reference to the statements, I would like to clarify my use of it.

What one believes is one of the most important things about a person. Beliefs control behavior if one is free to act as he thinks he should. The trouble comes when one holds a belief without support. Some people believe that 13 is an unlucky number; others believe that seeing the new moon for the first time over their right shoulder assures a month of good fortune. The trouble with such beliefs is that there is no support in nature or research for them.

When we realize that what people believe, including attitudes and feelings, controls their behavior, it is frightening to realize that many of their beliefs are unrelated to the nature of man and his universe. These people fall victim to irrational behavior, which affects and may even be harmful to not only them but everyone else. An example of such a belief is that all children can and therefore must learn to read at age six. This belief, held by many teachers, school administrators, and parents, has no support either from research or from performance. Behavior of adults who hold this belief wreaks havoc with our children, dooming many of them to become bad school citizens, teacher baiters, home disturbers, and finally dropouts. Many of our mentally ill and delinquent come from this group. If one asks why these adults believe this, the answer often is, "We always have."

Each person then has the task of getting his beliefs as much in line with what is known of the nature of man and his universe as he can. The teacher needs to hold beliefs about children which he can justify. I believe the following 12 statements and can give reasons why I believe them. If I believed the number 13 was unlucky, I could not support these beliefs.

If we can accept some beliefs which are in keeping with what is known about the nature of man and his universe, our practices will improve. It is in this hope that I submit the following statements together with brief elaborations to clarify meaning.

1. *Human beings are the most important things in the world.* Of course a human being has to have an environment. He has to have a planet to live on, and this planet ought to provide him with food, shelter, and hopefully such things as beauty. These, however, facilitate humans and are not the object of the whole enterprise.

In fact, the world around us exists, has reality, only as it is perceived by someone. This is not to deny it is there but only to point out that, unless it is perceived by someone, its existence does not matter. It *is* what the perceiver makes it to be.

Every human being is an asset. To put it most narrowly, he produces more than he consumes. Far more important, he adds to humanness. He is able to supply humanness to the very young, who cannot develop without other people. He adds to the sum of human creativeness.

The person is more important than the textbook.

2. *Children are people.* They are therefore entitled to be treated with human dignity and respect at all times. They are not something to do something to; they are to live with and grow with. They are to be treated as assets with great potentiality.

We often do things to children that we would not even consider doing to adults. Citizenship starts at birth, or so our Constitution says. The twentieth century is sometimes referred to as the century of the child, but we have a long way to go before children are really included in the human race. I do not think that this should be the century of the child, but I do believe that we must admit children to their fair share of the human adventure. This should be the century of the human family, with all enjoying the dignity, the valuing, that goes with being human.

3. *Each person is unique.* It is necessary to mention this for three reasons. The first is that we understand better now how the psychological self is built. We have known for a long time that the physical self is made so that it is virtually impossible for two people, except identical twins, to have the same cell structure. We now understand how the perceptive stuff of growth, which builds the psychological self, is selectively taken in. Nature's effort to achieve complete uniqueness is astonishing.

The second point is that, while we have talked about individual differences (uniqueness) for generations, we do not yet believe in them. If we did, we would cease trying to get everybody to learn the same things in the same way.

The third is that, since each human organism is unlike any other, each has something that nobody else has. This is the individual's significance, his reason-to-be.

4. *When any human being is lost or diminished, everybody loses.* This is directly related to man's uniqueness. When someone dies, something goes out of this world which was not here before and which cannot be replaced. This is what John Donne was saying centuries ago when he said, "Ask not for whom the bell tolls—it tolls for thee." He did not have the advantage of modern research, but his idea has been corroborated in our laboratories.

We often hear that the world has become very small. This is based on the fact that we can get from here to Samarkand in much less time than would have been necessary only a generation ago. This is a superficial time-space concept. Since people are the most important things in the world, the size of our world depends upon the number of people we have to relate to, the number of people whose unique behavior can affect us. Our world is not smaller but infinitely larger than the one we knew when we were children. It is a matter of seeing the individual's world as people or as things.

Physical death is not the only form of death or of being diminished. When anybody is made to think less of himself, to feel less able, it is partial death; and if it continues, the individual can become dead in the sense that he has become ineffective, immobilized, unable to enhance himself or others.

5. *Our children are all right when we get them.* By this I mean they are all right when they are born but not necessarily all right when they come to school. There are a few defectives damaged before they are born, and a few are damaged by the transition from womb to air, but there are not very many of these. Many more defectives are made after birth than before.

My purpose in putting this statement in is to remind us that when a child behaves in a way detrimental to us and to himself, he has been made this way by the life he has been required to live in an adult-managed world over which he has no control. We (adults in general) have made him that way. His psychological self has been damaged, just as one's physical self may be damaged by disease or accident. If we could see the psychological self as we can the physical, our hearts would go out to these children. We are prone to pity the physical cripple and blame the psychological cripple.

When we see a child behave in a harmful way, we should remember that he did not get that way by himself. He was born with a potential for good but has been prevented from growing n that direction. Every individual has to *learn* to be responsible for his own behavior, but this can only be learned in an atmosphere where cooperation and affection naturally lead to responsibility.

6. *Every human being can change and change for the better as long as he lives.* The few exceptions to this statement are the ones whose early infancy and childhood have been so hostile hat they have completely withdrawn and become quite inaccessible. Autistic babies and catatonic older people are examples, but they are in hospitals, not in schools. So I feel that the above tatement is true for everyone who goes to school.

A good deal has been said over the years about the importance f the first year. Some have gone so far as to say that by the end f the third year the die is cast for life. I do not mean to deny he importance of these years; damaged children will never be what they once might have been. An unloved and unwanted child will doubtless carry symptoms of this deprivation throughout life. We are all handicapped, however, in one way or another, by life's vicissitudes. We take these handicaps and make what we can of life as we are.

Anyone who is still accessible can improve, and this leads to further improvement. If it were true that nothing can be done for a child after the age of five, there would be little need for eachers. If teaching were confined to the dreary business of getting people, already ruined, to read, write, and cypher, followed by drilling the "facts," the teacher's life would indeed be bleak. But when one realizes that the teacher has the opportunity to take damaged young ones and show them ways to growth and fulfillment, the task of teaching takes on new meaning and excitement. The possibility of change is the teacher's great reason-to-be.

7. *No one of any age does anything with determination and verve without being involved in it.* The task has to seem worth doing to the individual; it has to make sense to him. This is well known and accepted in the adult world and too little considered in the school.

This is not to say that the child or anyone else has the right to "do just as he pleases." No responsible educator has ever advocated this. It is a canard invented by authoritarians to make democratic behavior seem ridiculous. The idea of change frightens the authoritarian, because he might have to learn new behavior.

I know of no way of involving people in tasks except through consultation. It is through this process that the learner comes to see the reasons for doing whatever lies ahead. He does not have to have his own way, but he has to see that the task is a worthy one before he can spend his energy on it in any true sense.

We teachers are so accustomed to deciding what the tasks will be before we even see the learner that most of us lack skill in consultation. We are so full of our own compulsions and purposes that, even when we attempt to consult with the learner, we wait for what we had in mind to emerge before we register approval.

We must learn how to consult. To do this, we must free ourselves of our own compulsions, since unique human beings a generation or two removed from us are not likely to choose what we have in mind. How much happier the lives of early elementary teachers and their children would be if, in teaching reading, the learners saw it as a worthy task or the teacher were free and willing to wait until the learner *could* see some sense or purpose in it.

8. *How a person feels is more important than what he knows.* This is true because one's feelings and attitudes control behavior while one's knowledge does not.

We have been working too hard trying to get our learners to know. We have even sought to have them know exactly what we know, in the same way. We have not realized that the knower and the known are inseparable; that knowledge is what we know after we have learned; that this learning can occur only in the light of the unique learner's experience and purpose and therefore can never be exactly the same in two different people.

We have, as a rule, paid too little attention to how our learners feel. This, however, is what makes knowledge usable. If a person comes to think too little of himself, to feel too inferior, he may come to the point where he cannot do anything, where he cannot function.

Our attention, therefore, needs to be directed to a different outcome. At the end of a school day, each child needs to feel better about himself than he did the day before. He needs to feel more courageous, more confident, more able to meet whatever problems life may present. The vicissitudes of life cannot be foreseen, but we can make each child more able to meet them in all of their various forms.

There are those who may worry about the neglect of the "fundamentals" and subject matter. This need not concern us. The person who feels good about himself will learn to read better and sooner than he will if he sees himself as unable to do so. He will learn more about the world about him (his proper subject matter) when he can look at himself and say, "It is enough." Thus we gain not only in the direction of human adequacy but also in the things we have always cherished.

9. *Freedom is a requirement for humanness.* I do not mean freedom to do just as one pleases; nobody has this. The instant one starts living near anyone else, he loses his freedom to do just as he pleases because he must take this other person into account. I mean freedom within the social scene; I mean having some choices, the chance to decide whether to do this or that. This automatically involves other people.

Every human being is uniquely purposive. In the absence of freedom to choose paths down which one's energies can best be spent, purpose has no meaning. The whole history of mankind has been a struggle between those who would be free and those who would oppress. This is the same struggle that goes on in many classrooms. A child, told exactly what to do, watched, tested to see whether he did it, and having sanctions applied when he does not or cannot do it, does not know freedom. Of course, he can reject the whole thing as many do. This is not a real choice, but a negation; it is not a choice between two or more paths for positive action.

Freedom begets creativity. The person who is free to choose will in some degree be creative. A person is creative when he is faced with a dilemma and devises a solution not necessarily new to all the world but new to himself. Creativity is the growing edge of life; it can only occur in an atmosphere of freedom.

It would be good if we would look to our young in this tightly packed industrial society to see how freedom fares. How many choices do our children really have? And if they do not have it in this "land of the free," where else will it be nourished?

10. *All forms of exclusion and segregation represent the evil use of power and are evil.* In order to avoid long and tiresome debate about the meanings of *good* and *evil*, I will define them as I use them. That which improves self and others is *good.* That which diminishes self or others is *evil.*

I do not limit this discussion to exclusion and segregation on the basis of skin color or creed although they are a prominent part of our social problem. This exclusion is only part of the evil of exclusion. I wish to include the segregation of bluebirds from crows; the exclusion of accessible people from school; the disfranchisement of those whom adults frown upon from participation in the school council; the denial to some of the right to take part in student activities; the separation of children into X, Y, and Z groups to suit adult convenience. The child in the X group is robbed of part of his human birthright as surely as the one in the Z group. The list could be extended almost indefinitely.

Who can compute the loss suffered when those already born are not developed to their full potential? Who can prophesy the actual potential of what may seem to be the first-grade dullard, if his promise cannot grow and bloom? Many of the greatest men in our history were considered dullards in school.

If each human being is a potential asset (see statement 1), we are far from the point where we have too many assets. Man's and machines' ingenuity in the production of food, clothing, and shelter has not even been tested so far. What we need to learn is better development of human potential, better ways for people to spend their energies, better ways of distributing the goods of the earth. These cannot be attained through humiliation of the individual by exclusion or segregation, either in school or out.

11. *All forms of rejection are evil.* I refer here not only to obvious instances where, in later years, children are expelled or frozen out of school. I am thinking of the many subtle forms of rejection which go on in the lives of so many children of all ages. We are all aware of the low grade on the report card, which has to be taken home and often has the effect of increasing distance between parent and child. Little children, often too young to understand what it is all about, are subjected to emotional tones of disapproval which they know only too well.

Rejection takes innumerable forms; it shows up when least expected. Many teachers whom we all consider excellent and who love children habitually operate in ways which damage some children. When a child is unfavorably compared with another who may be what adults call "bright," when a child's failure to comprehend is made conspicuous, when he is called upon to compete in an area for which he is not ready and cannot come out well, it is like entering a cripple in a footrace and then making him feel inferior because he did not win it.

Here we set in motion a whole cluster of feelings and attitudes which grow and fester. Here we sow the wind; the whirlwind is reaped later in dropouts, mental illness, delinquency, and attendant evils. Research experts tell us that most high school dropouts can be identified by the time they are in the third grade, many even earlier. Thus the dropout problem is an elementary school one. The future dropout is the nonreader, the over-aged, sometimes the rebel.

We cannot afford to reject anybody. I say this not only for humanitarian reasons but also for practical, economic, and social reasons. The rejected are too expensive. Rejection causes feelings of hostility which lead to aggression, to alienation from self and others, to withdrawal, to delinquency, to adult crime and prison, or to mental hospitals.

How to teach without rejection is a matter each must study because each must work out his own way. If we do not know how, we must learn. Our present curriculum, made by adults without knowing who the learner is or what he is like, has rejection of some of our own young planned and built-in in advance. If the program is such that everybody can master it, then it is too easy and has to be made difficult enough so that there will be no human waste. This is because there is one program for all members of any particular class of learners, be they X, Y, or Z. A proper and urgent study for all teachers is how to individualize learning so that there will be something for everyone, so that everyone can hold up his head.

12. *Our task is to build better people.* This appears to be a truism, but it is in fact a switch in objectives. It has been assumed that what lies outside the learner is what is important. This outside material, often called "knowledge," when injected, will of itself make better people. This has not worked, because too often the injection has called for too much coercion; and this has damaged the psychological self and reduced self-esteem. It is here that the individual learns hate instead of love. This process has been self-defeating because whatever value the injected knowledge might have had is rendered unusable.

The self-esteem must come first and what the child learns about his world will follow, but it will not be the first objective.

We have all heard "Teach the child" for as long as we can remember. This gains real meaning when our first consideration is how the child feels about himself, others, and his world, not how he can perform on tests or how he can give evidence of possession of items of subject matter which adults cherish.

We come to see ourselves as helpers. We accept the individual as he is and help him to grow to be what only he can become. We accept the amount of growth he is able to make in the time we are together as the best he and we are able to do under unique circumstances. This calls for a new set of standards. Whereas we have been accustomed to hold standards related to that which lies outside the learner, we now need to hold to high standards in human terms, in terms of feeling, attitude, courage, and adequacy. We who seek to have teaching inner-directed rather than outer-directed are sometimes accused of lacking standards. What the accusers should say is, "You do not have *my* standards." It is true that we care about different things, and it is here contended that we must learn to care about the selves of our learners.

Teachers of young children may feel that many of these items do not apply to them; I think they do. They apply to children too young to come to school as well as those old enough to come. The secondary school curriculum is of concern to the first-grade teacher because the school program is a total construct. Adequate living and learning in the early years will make the same kind of living more possible in the later years.

Certainly we have given outer-directed education a good trial. Kilpatrick has said we have been at it for 200 years before Christ. Though we have the most schooled population in history, we do not seem to have better people. We have too much hate, prejudice, and short-sighted selfishness in the world. We have little to lose and much to gain by changing our objectives to the development of better people.

Reflections on Childhood Identity and the School

2

Donald McNassor
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I

In the years of childhood, the tree of knowledge hangs full of oranges. These are the years when the scent of learning runs strong. Never again will the center of the child's identity be so inseparable from his performance in school. And never again will there be so much danger of a negative identity forming as a result of school experience.

Children do not know that organized learning in classrooms makes only part of a man, a small part. How is a young child to know that he will become something unique in the world—a restless, striving man or woman, driven by the sensibilities of poet and philosopher, stimulated by the brain of the scientist. How is he to know, after such a short journey, that his individuality could not have been predicted. He will build a private world out of many secret experiences with the human and natural universe. Time and age will educate him. Sunsets, storms, fields of flowers, and blazing comets will arouse impulse and thought in him. The animals, plants, and colored stones of the earth will be a constant source of wonderment and quest, as they have always been. The child will search for their origins as he searches for his own. Along the way he will be introduced to a great book that will arouse universal human emotions. The objects he turns over and looks through will start him in new directions. What his father and mother feel deeply about will leave an indelible mark. What people do to each other will give him much about which to wonder. But he does not know these things yet. Now,

A co-worker can help.

We learn from each other.

School is a good place to be.

Companionship is available.

in his elementary school years, he knows only that he *is* what his parents think he is and he *is* what he can do at school to win the approval of his teachers.

So deep is the urge to be industrious in the ways of the teachers, as the only way to grow up, that children believe *they are what they learn in school.* It takes at least fifteen years of living to realize that schooling is only a means, that what you are is something vastly more significant in the universe than what you learned in school. The young child does not give up easily in the tasks with which he is challenged in school. He will keep trying despite the times of discouragement and failure. Tomorrow he may do better. Or next year he will be somebody who does it well. He will try to learn whatever is required, even when the tasks are beyond his reach, so long as someone wants him to and offers to help. Difficult tasks and some inevitable encounters with failure, under the shield of a helping, supporting teacher, can result in beneficial effects in children. Initiative is smothered by a continuous overdose of failure.

A few children are not ready to learn in school. These are the fear-ridden ones who will be discussed in a later section. But most children are eager and ready to go wherever their teachers take them; at least they are in this mood for the first several years. They are restless with an ancient instinct to become, to push ahead, to grow in the ways of their elders. They are aggressive, and their aggression is a mind builder. Without it, the source of human growth would dry up at an early stage. Man has come a very long, arduous way from the slow, halting beginnings of his species on the African plains. Instinctively he searches forever for new meanings inside himself and for ways of controlling everything outside. He is part of a species endowed with incomprehensible powers of observation. He is self-renewing by nature, curious and imaginative by temperament, and a learner by instinct. Had it not been this way, he would have ended with a whimper at the edge of the great glaciers of the last Ice Age.

All of the children we see today in the schools are the descendants of man, not descendants of their parents. They are the inheritors of the ancient drives to learn, to use the brain, and to protect vulnerable creatures. Because we set our sights for everyone so high, we sometimes become discouraged with the task of group instruction of masses of children. There is always more to be done than is possible, always greater expectation than fulfillment. But in our reflection on the enormity of the task, our helplessness in nurturing and stimulating high human potentiality in all of our children, remember the chief ally of the teacher—the powerful drives in children to become they know not what, to learn they know not why, to be what never was intended.

Childhood is the renaissance of learning. Learning for its own sake, with no utilitarian strings attached, is the natural order of things in the elementary years. The child wants to learn because curiosity is the ingredient for human growth and for defense. He is driven to question all things. He puts knowledge inside himself to grow strong. We speak of the highly motivated learner as one who "eats it up." When the slightest skill or concept is possessed, the sense of accomplishment goes to the head, nourishing a feeling of well-being that builds an immunity against the days of failure and incompetency. The child's effort to learn whatever is put before him at school comes naturally because learning involves power and control, and these are the genetic inheritance of all children.

What I am trying to say is that man's child, in any society, will work industriously to learn the ways of his human group, for he is driven by deep instinct to protect his future. If he falters or hesitates, it is not because of lack of inherited power to develop potentialities. It is simply that he cannot live well and learn on will alone. He is young, unsure, and inexperienced. Without support, direction, and a large amount of confidence from his teachers at home and at school, he becomes something fear-ridden and jealous—a child of *Lord of the Flies*. Aggression, instead of being a mind builder, is turned toward self-destruction.

II

As to how identity is formed in childhood, we understand the central role played through identification with parents. In his mind, a child *is* what his mother and father think he is. He is smart, clever, generous, dull, or awkward as they relate to him what they feel. He is pleased with himself, confident in coping with new tasks, anxious to take the initiative to learn anew each day, if his parents have reflected these feelings and expectations to him.

In the first few years of school, identity is still based primarily on the sense of mutuality between child and adult. Teachers are parent figures to the child. In his eyes, they take care of him, help him to see, show him what can be learned, protect him from continuous failure. This is literally how children feel about their teachers, even when it is not deserved. Every new teacher is a potential helper, innocent until proven guilty. The child's so-called self, his identity, is inextricably bound up in his imagery about who his teachers think he is and what they think he is fitted for. Little does he know how meager their assessment of his potential qualities is. His first real identity crisis in life will come during his youth when the need to establish himself as a separate and unique identity, different from his parents and teachers, will break through to consciousness.

At school, as in the home, the child's identity is firmly based on his positive and negative identifications with teachers. Those who succeed in teaching him that he is competent to learn and to move on have given him a firm foundation for a childhood identity based on strength and courage. Those who have taught him that he is lacking much and that he may not move on with his generation have also given him an identity, some of which he will retain permanently, despite its discomfort. In the formation of the private world of the self, teachers' attitudes toward children count more than their techniques, materials, and new machines.

The identity base, of course, is widened in the school years, for the child has left the home to become a big person. He is now a worker in society in his own right. There are jobs to be done, skills to be mastered independently, so what he *is* now will no longer amount to just being himself and being "good." What he is now will be extended to success in new skills and concepts, which will come in a never-ending flow until he leaves the elementary school. Daily he will be confronted with his own ignorance, which he is challenged to expel. For many years, he will equate school with growing up. Only in rare moments will he think of turning back or of escaping the challenges to grow.

It is as exhilarating to him to move to a higher grade, a new level of challenge, as it is discouraging to be associated with those in a less mature category.

The eminent psychoanalyst Erik H. Erikson, in his characteristically profound language about children, describes the elementary school years as a fundamental growth and crisis stage in the human cycle. He calls this the stage of "Industry vs. Inferiority" in the evolution of childhood personality, when "I am what I learn. The child now wants to be shown how to get busy with something and how to be busy with others . . . he now learns to win recognition by *producing things*. To bring a productive situation to completion is an aim which gradually supersedes the whims and wishes of his idiosyncratic drives and personal disappointments. . . . The danger at this stage is the development of a sense of *inadequacy and inferiority*." All elementary school teachers should refresh themselves by reading the pages of this reference (Erikson, 1959).

III

It is clear then that classroom planning for successes in learning and teacher attitudes toward the child's potentialities to learn are matters of urgency in identity formation in childhood. A child who is not working at least half of the time toward skill mastery and the manipulation of concepts in the study materials must be viewed as in critical danger. If he is simply not involved very often, he is paying a frightful price in self-depreciation. There is no alternative to viewing such a condition as a crisis of first order, for the child is not following his instinctive drive to learn. Sometimes this serious state characterizes a few children in a classroom; sometimes it shows up in whole groups or classes. It is seen occasionally in children whose family cultural milieu is anti-intellectual, where emotions and desires count more than brains. Some children in minority groups are not living well as learners; their failure to please and to achieve is laying stone upon stone in their human development. And many white, middle class children can be found, in one school or the other, withholding native energy and intelligence. All of these are children who have more imagination than they are willing to put to work in school, more creativity in skill mastery than they care to express. Some children hold back at school because the fears, angers, or jealousies arising out of life at home are sources of so much unconscious preoccupation that energy is not available for success at school. But this does not explain the crucial situations, not related to the child's life at home, for which schools and teachers *must assume full responsibility*. These situations will be discussed after mention of something else that produces rigidity and mind-set in those who teach.

Two great illusions persist in education in the second half of this century. One is that a large number of children are not responsive learners at school because they have "bad" parents; they have suffered too much indignity at home. There is some truth in this, but not in nearly as many instances as it is comforting for us to believe. Plenty of the *responsive* learners also have suffered indignities in families, have felt jealousy, failure, and rejection. All children have parents who are "bad" some of the time. The people they love and need most are the most likely ones to arouse jealousy and aggression in them. In order to improve the educational processes for learning, the sooner we abandon the illusion of the "bad" parent, the better. The illusion is so strong that some of us are willing, even anxious, to believe that 3 or 4 children out of 10 are emotionally disturbed in their homes and, therefore, cannot learn well in school. Few children escape being emotionally disturbed in their homes in our culture. Even then, those who have been severely damaged can be helped to learn in school.

The second illusion is that we can predict and measure human potentiality through the tools of testing. Testing is the biggest business of all in education. Some future day, when historians and anthropologists are delving into the remnants of twentieth century man, they will be amused, and possibly horrified, that in our times we thought we could neatly gauge man's ability to learn and to unfold new capacities through testing and other such processes. We are told today in business and education that the data processing computer can predict human response and development. So anxious are we to believe this that we willingly donate billions of dollars to the cause. Aside from obvious values in testing children as a way of learning more about them, the testing process has turned out to be our chief obstacle in really *seeing* individuals and encouraging them to learn and to imagine. We have our A, B, C or X, Y, Z groups in many schools. And once the X's are separated from the Y's, unfortunately for them, we respond and challenge according to their due. The top groups may get plenty of challenge and much from the teacher personally. A few in these groups get more than they can manage, along with a sense of inadequacy and failure. They may well wish they were not so smart. The lower and middle groups undoubtedly tend to be understimulated and underestimated. Since testing processes presumably predict their ceilings and the scope and depth of their present and future powers of imagination, the teacher is tempted to solidify the ceilings and to censor imagination. There is a prevalent belief that we can identify, in individual cases, the college type from the noncollege type and that creativity comes in well-defined, measurable packages. What we can say about testing is that it identifies children with very limited native capacities for formal school learning and those who stand out as shooting stars, but everyone in between is on shifting sands.

I do not wish to say that tests, as diagnostic tools to get further glimpses into student potentiality, should not be used. Nor should we abandon selective grouping for specific learning objectives. What I am saying is that categorizing children as types, through testing processes, affects what we communicate to and expect of them. If teachers would pay less attention to the type of group to which they have been assigned and more attention to what and how individual pupils think, provide them with a wide assortment of challenges and stimuli, and observe the flow of the brain power and imagination in those individuals, some children in school would miraculously come to life.

IV

The crucial situations affecting learning response at school, not related to the child's life at home and for which schools and teachers must assume full responsibility, are well within the power of educators to control. I have said children want to be active learners because this is the basis of much of childhood identity in America, the only road to becoming a worthy person. Many of them show a style of imagination and energy in approaching intellectual tasks outside of school which is constrained and withheld in school. Each child before us has *some* thoughts of excellence, order and form, and notions of relationships and cause and effect. Each one has buried within him, behind a self-imposed mental censorship, something of the ways of the artist and musician, sociologist and scientist. Each one has more to build upon than he dares express. There is more to him than he will release; he knows more than he will tell. Children are often found to be a little more artistic, alert, imaginative, and creative in solving problems outside of the rigidly structured class setting than in it. Why? Here are some of the contributing conditions.

THE TEACHER AS PSYCHOLOGICAL CENSOR

Children attribute great power and wisdom to their teachers. Outside of parents, teachers are the most important people in the child's world. Young children in school do not take their cues from the books concerning what is worth thinking about; they take their cues from the trusted, wise teacher who must know so much and be so right because he is a teacher. How is an inexperienced child to know about his trusted teacher's limited views of the universe? The child has no alternative but to accept the teacher's priorities for thought excellence, to say things that will arouse enthusiastic response in the teacher. If the teacher is a flexible person whose imagination and wonderment about things has not withered, the child can proceed to think and to solve problems under a beneficent and generous psychological censor. He can have it both ways—explore and test his unique capacity for creating and heed the wisdom of man's experience in a disciplined way.

Lively, disciplined, and fully motivated classes which I have observed invariably are conducted by teachers who give fully of what they have learned in their years of the life cycle and who allow a wide berth for the free play of children's imagination. These teachers impart what they know, confidently and aggressively, while encouraging the pupils to respect and develop their own slowly emerging, half-formulated concepts. If school children are active, imaginative, and task-centered, it is not primarily because they have a firm and efficient teacher; it is because their thoughts are not repressed under a ponderous heavy censorship by this teacher. Arbitrariness and dogmatism in some of us, more than anything I can think of, is responsible for children failing to breathe life into their studies. And if one-fifth of a class performs in a perfunctory way out of fear of not thinking things out according to the censorship, the condition can become contagious, for children will communicate their fears to one another.

Thought is censored in many ways. It is censored in the ideas of children which get no response from us, in the solutions offered by the child which are politely ignored, in the content of papers that are graded or just not acknowledged, in the range of ways in which achievement is indicated in a study unit or subject, in giving quick verbal facility more approval than is accorded a project slowly but carefully constructed in the mind. Thought in a child is censored, too, through neglecting to tell him privately, once in a while, what we think of his proudest productions.

In this discussion, we are talking about a psychological censorship that causes the uncertain, inexperienced child to give up an idea or a project that, with nourishment, might have opened new doors. We are talking about how doors get closed, perhaps forever, through the influence of the school. We are not referring to the opening of doors through vigorous teaching which sifts, evaluates, and grades. This process, too, could be called censorship, but it does not close doors.

Thought censorship is imposed on classrooms in another disguised form that may be the worst of all. What is *not allowed on the Program* for the day quickly dries up the wells of children's initiative. Here lies the challenge for the teacher with a big heart and a keen sense of the teaching mission to conduct an orderly process of learning that allows for feeling and thought exploration *not* on the Program, a disciplined classroom that does not produce Pavlovian effects. There is a little story which we might ponder the rest of our teaching days. It is found in Malmberg's (1940) *Ake and His World.* The story concerns five little children whose parents conditioned them to respond to life in prescribed ways. Here is part of it.

> There were no children in the whole town who were so well brought up as Mr. Goodman's. . . . There were two years difference in age between each of them, because there should be order in everything. . . . They were exactly like one another except as to size. They had the same wide open eyes, and the same large outstanding ears. They had got them because they were so anxious to look for the least gesture and to listen for the smallest correction from their parents. . . . (After congratulating their mother, one at a time, on her birthday), she clapped her hands together with a little smack, and in the same moment the children flew out of the room. But they had not given their mother any birthday kiss, because that was unhygienic, and besides that was not on the Program. (At the funeral of their mother, they each in turn, said "Goodbye, dear Mama," then) When they had said this they stood at first uncertain about what they should do, because there was no one now to clap her hands together with a little smack. They would have liked so much to have hung on to their father, for they were afraid. But they did not do it because it was not on the Program. (And that night), there was not one who could sleep in the five small beds. Ten large, wide open eyes stared out into the night, ten large outstanding ears listened in the dark, five small throats fought against weeping. . . . But not one of them wept so that one could hear, not one of them moaned aloud in childish sorrow. Because that was not on the Program.

Children learn what's on the Program, but much richness of human personality remains forever buried inside them because of what was not allowed on the Program.

THE TEACHER AS THE WITHHOLDER AND GIVER OF LIFE

A teacher can withhold life from children by failing to give freely to them the truths he thinks he has learned in his lifetime. Some of us may feel teaching should be a very impersonal, objective thing, that the impersonal teacher's role is to get children to interact with materials of instruction. Thus, children are deprived of their greatest heritage—the knowledge secured the hard way by the teacher's generation. Adults are responsible for seeing that the new generation receives the benefit of what it took them decades to learn. If we teach little children what we were taught as children but no longer believe, or if we withhold much of what we think we know, then human potentiality will drag along on the old myths and superstitions (Chisholm, 1958). There has been entirely too much emphasis on objectivity in teaching, on the safe, impersonal use of instructional material. This is the hygienic approach; no one gets infected this way, and no one gets excited either.

We have become afraid to impart wisdom and convictions to children, and the consequence is more apathy and disinterest in classrooms than is necessary. I would like to see more teacher ego involvement in teaching, less blandness and impartiality. This does not have to mean being the dogmatist and psychological censor.

In looking for reasons why some children's brains are working hard and their hearts are pumping vibrantly in classrooms, notice how some teacher is giving so much life to them, over and beyond his books, reading machines, and mimeographed problem sheets. He breathes life into the class each day by revealing his own discoveries, as an adult, about knowledge. He shares with children his private intellectual or artistic creations. He brings an object for all to admire and wonder about, or he plans a trip to a place that is a source of delight and renewal for him. It is really a simple thing to give life to children, to share it with them. If we are withholders of life, teaching will be humdrum, and children will keep some doors closed that it will be too late to open in the years after childhood.

THE REPRESSION OF LEARNING IN THE MASS SETTING

Some very secure, confident, and delightfully verbal children always seem to be alert and productive in the large class of 35 or 40. Nothing stops them, not even excessive psychological censoring. But this by no means includes the majority. Many children simply will not come out of their shells and take the initiative of which they are capable in this daily exposure of their perceived inadequacies to the influential peer subculture. A child who customarily is cautious and restrained in the large class becomes a different person when an adult works with him alone on class problems or in the presence of six or eight other children. This bland learner turns into a thinking, verbal, aggressive learner. In the mass situation, placed in an age of conformity, the individual is anonymous. He isn't very important. Take five or six of the least responsive of your learners, give them special attention and help, and watch these nonverbal people come alive.

GROUPING AND THE CHILD'S IMAGE OF MEDIOCRITY

Children often are grouped, by classes or within classes, in some arrangement of slow, average, and fast learners. To see why some children do not learn with their hearts, look to the effects of grouping. I do not mean the direct effect of grouping per se. I mean the insidious effect of grouping, for those in the lower categories, in the demeanor of a teacher who conveys to children an image of mediocrity, an expectation of simple-minded products. There are, to be sure, many *slow* and *average* groups of pupils today, who enthusiastically express their instinctive urge to learn. Their teachers believe they have a wide range of intellectual potential, expect them to go far, and have confidence that they will do so. As a consequence the pupils work hard, with surprising results. If little is expected of these children, on the other hand, if it has been decided that they will become technological workers but not humanist citizens, if there is some slight resentment in having to work with the *lower third,* then the children will hold back. If *we* think their doors are shut, they will quietly close them and just get along. More children than one wants to think about are gradually convincing themselves that they are slow and cannot be expected to do very well in the intellectual tasks of schools. By the sixth grade, the die is cast; the image is fixed; the urge to secure much more information has come to an early end. Grouping is not at fault; what teachers communicate to children, nonverbally and in those momentary slips of the tongue, as to the kind of people they are to have been placed in this group is to blame.

INFERIORITY IN THE IDENTITY OF BOYS

By nature, boys are intruding, aggressive, competitive, and combative people. Sharp observation of male babies in comparison with girls makes this clear. They are hunters; their territory has no boundaries. Restless with urges to dominate, to be assertive and insertive, they are compulsive intruders. Their drives will be an advantage someday when channeled into occupations, but now in the early school years, their intruding behavior is a disadvantage. A great deal of their learning will be with women, who can take only so much intrusiveness. The boys are the discipline problems, the stutterers, the morose, the messy handwriters, the ones usually a year behind in reading level. Little second- and third-grade girls are well aware of who gives teachers a hard time—the nonpassive, nonconforming boys. Quite a few boys will feel that there is something immoral about them in their first few years of school, where the best rewards are given for well-mannered, noiseless activity in reading, writing, and recitation.

A boy's aggressiveness is the center of his identity, and wise teachers accept this and find ways to release it in learning activity. If female teachers, or male ones for that matter, are not afraid of boys, that is to say do not find their ways obnoxious, boys will work in a disciplined atmosphere. The positive approach to them is to provide a wide range of learning tasks suitable to their hunting instincts. It is not necessary for so many boys to feel shameful about being boys in their encounters with learning in the early years.

THE CREATIVE UNCONSCIOUS

In those obscure regions below the conscious mind, impulses, urges, and vaguely formed thoughts are in constant motion to find release in behavior that will make them permanently possessed. What a child is saying in class in response to the teacher's questions, what he writes or draws or constructs, is a small part of his potential. What he makes verbal does not describe him nearly so well as what he is quietly turning over and cannot say because he has not yet fully possessed it. The impulses that are pushing toward form and order, the fragmentary, half-formulated thoughts, the near inclinations to bring something concrete into the light of day, these are the preconscious beginnings of creativity. Lawrence Kubie (1958) proposes that "The creative person is one who in some manner, which today is still accidental, has retained his capacity to use his pre-conscious functions more freely than is true of others who may potentially be equally gifted."

We can be sure that the potentials of a child are influenced in some way by organic, constitutional factors. It is likely also that the civilization of his century imposes restrictions on what the brain will be permitted to bring through a screen of censorship. But I have no doubt that a great deal of pressure against the release of creative capacity comes from the educational setting itself. If this were untrue, children would not be observed showing more explosive drive and excellence of thought under one teacher than under another, in one school climate than in another, in one grade than in the next. Yet this observation is commonplace. The materials, equipment, and the teacher's ways in one class seem to beckon to children to wring out of themselves their half-formed thoughts, to give voice and thrust to their near inclinations. Such effort is rewarded in this class; criticism is held to a minimum. The various milieus of another class tighten the screen that encloses preconscious drives, pushing them back into darkness. In each child is a world of possible but nonexistent futures. It is a particular role of teachers of children to encourage these nonexistent futures that already have begun forming in preconscious stirrings and thought gravitations. A teacher can find his own ways to keep the preconscious streams of inclination and diffuse thought moving through the barrier to reality, if he accepts their existence and realizes their crucial relevance to learning and creativity. Some of the simple things he can do to make reality out of what is latent include support and encouragement to the child who seems about to say or do something, then hesitates and backs off; the teacher can invite it to come through, wait another minute, keep it alive by listening more.

In our modern speed tempo, where speed of response is the only kind judged to be excellent, how often have we impatiently said to a child who was searching, groping for a form, "We'll return to Jane later, *if* she can say what she means," or "Don't speak unless you have something to say." Forms of support include a wide range of stimuli to thought—taking time, giving children time, reducing the senseless speed tempo; providing work corners for private independent study, out of the traffic stream; talking with individuals enough to know some of their intimate, half-formed thoughts and inclinations; avoiding any degree of ridicule of what children try to produce and can't finish into polished form. Above all, recognize that in the nether world of preconscious striving, children are very insecure. Their inexperience makes them guard against exposure of projects or ideas not fully possessed. They wait for the most favorable circumstances before attempting to give voice to thought and inclination which are fragmented and vague to start with.

HIDDEN VERBAL ABILITY

A child who is *nonverbal* is fictitious. All children are verbal when the situation allows language and thought form that is familiar to the inner life of the individual. A child is "nonverbal" when he is afraid of exposure. He is "nonverbal" when the official language involves concepts that are unfamiliar to or rejected by his family subculture. He remains silent if there is a great distance between his everyday language and the formal language of the classroom. But he is not *nonverbal*. It is important to think diagnostically about verbal ability. Otherwise, we will see many "nonverbal" children in our schools, and we will pass them by year after year, never knowing how articulate they might become. If we first abandon the predication that some children are nonverbal, then techniques will be discovered to bring out verbal facility. The so-called "nonverbal" children are being deprived of a good education because not much is expected or demanded from them and because of a professional mind-set that some people can work better with their hands than with their heads.

Frank Riessman, Department of Psychiatry, Columbia University, states that several important questions about *hidden verbal ability* must be answered by research. Under what conditions are they ("nonverbal" school children) verbal? What kind of stimuli do they respond to verbally? With whom are they verbal? What do they think about? What do they talk about? What parts of speech do they use? Are they more verbal in smaller groups, in role-played problem situations? What experiences can aid them in overcoming their obvious deficit in formal language of the central school disciplines?

Dr. Riessman's book, *The Culturally Deprived Child,* and the current work of Martin Deutsch of the New York Medical College should be read by all teachers who are ready to give up the idea that children, in some constitutional way, are nonverbal. These children have *hidden* verbal ability. It is up to us to find and release it.

THE FEAR OF LEARNING

I said earlier that all children possess a scent for learning, that they are learners in their culture by instinct. Otherwise they could not grow and they could not survive. A few children, however, are so confused as to an identity, so fearful, that they are not ready to learn in school. They are afraid to learn. Bruno Bettelheim (1961), University of Chicago, refers to them as children who have decided to fail.

The following discourse on the fear of learning was prepared in collaboration with Frank Tallman, Professor of Psychiatry, School of Medicine, University of California at Los Angeles (McNassor and Tallman, 1963).

The "decision" of some children not to learn in school is usually engendered by unhealthy emotional stress in the family which involves the child. This "decision" is clearly related to strong feelings of fear and anxiety which become excessive because of the lack of loving parental support and understanding correction which are essential to the development of a healthy personality. Most parents can supply this nutrient behavior in sufficient quantity and quality, and at the right time, to keep at a minimum the fear and anxiety that no one can avoid during his childhood. In fact, healthy parental correction serves as sort of an inoculation which is protective to the child as he moves from the family into the larger world, where he is expected to add greatly to his set of social and moral values and to acquire a wide range of skills. A developing conscience made up of the parents' demands and example insists on boundaries for impulses and social accomplishments that include learning in school and acceptable compliance with the expectations of home and community.

In the normal course of things, before entering school, the child has already begun to cope with feelings of fear and anxiety that cannot be avoided in the early years. At this time and during the early school period, he feels a deep need for affection, for success on every front, and for protection from undisciplined impulses that are inevitably stimulated by the conflicting currents of emotions toward father and mother, and by powerful needs of assertion and possession. Gratification of affection is never enough, and he vacillates between wanting, even demanding, more and more and being afraid that he will lose what he has.

In the early years, parents are the main source of supply, and thus the balance they strike between control and gratification determines if this fear is to be a hindrance or a help. Too little gratification and too much fear produces an angry child who may demonstrate this by attacking or by demanding behavior. Or, if the fear is too overpowering, the child may withdraw and become silent and angry. Both home and school know these kinds of unhappy children painfully well.

Normal children who learn at school have achieved enough balance between the gratification of their impulses and life's controlling demands, and sufficient support and understanding from parents or parent figures, that defense by the extremes of attack or flight is infrequent and inconsequential; it does not interfere in their efforts to work industriously toward new concepts and new skills. They experience fear and its companion, anxiety, and although they may have short, periodic episodes of somewhat difficult adjustments, their growth is unmistakably forward. They plunge with confidence into school studies because experience in their own families has not made them truants from their better selves. Because they trust themselves sufficiently to be able to have what they need without rejection or painful frustration, they can trust teachers and "give" energy industriously to studies. The strengthening of the ego that in turn comes from "learning" reaffirms the sense of trust.

There are some children in school who are not really ready to learn. They have made the "decision" (unconsciously for

> the most part) to back off from learning because learning for them carries the expectation of failure in competition, hence a certainty of the kind of rejection that is constantly invited through chronic failure. Thus, a dreary and anxiety-producing circular response becomes the child's unhappy lot. All of these negative feelings become inextricably woven into their attitude toward teachers, who are usually women, and thus are often identified as mothers. Some children who come to school with this set of feelings stop efforts to learn, and withdraw from the learning task of the class. They react to teachers not as teachers but as powerful parents who will not give them anything of themselves, or in some mysterious way will take something away from them. They are unable effectively to separate feelings about parents from feelings about their teachers, and since they have given up aggression as a way to get what they want at home, they follow the same pattern at school. Successful repression of aggression and assertion toward the outside world is fatal to the learning process at school.
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> Other children, afraid, angry and confused, try to solve this problem in quite the opposite way. Instead of withdrawal, they show their anger at not being loved enough by extroverted behavior directed at other pupils, teachers, and at learning tasks. They are restless and hostile; they dodge and maneuver; they hit and run. Most of all they avoid any close ties to the teacher because the teacher is closely identified with mother, father, or both. For this kind of child the classroom society is a dangerous microcosm. The teacher directly and the other classroom citizens inferentially demand control, conformity and learning. Because the child endows by projection all adults, and usually his peer group, too, with a hostility at least equal to his own, it takes very little to trigger panic to which he reacts with angry aggression. Someone in the classroom or on the playground responds in kind. The circle is again complete. School, teacher, and danger become synonymous. The child sees learning as capitulation to his enemies, and this he dares not do.
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> These two major categories become a problem of urgent importance. How to reach and how to teach children whose fears and hostilities make them disassociate themselves from learning, is an educational problem of major importance. Those who act out their fear in direct ways cause great disturbance in the work-achievement climate of the classroom. Those whose reaction is to withdraw present a pitiful and frustrating problem for the children as well as for their teachers. Most members of both groups are "well" enough to be in school. They cannot be considered "sick" enough to become the responsibility of the clinician. Their "decision" to avoid learning is the educator's challenge. The challenge can best be met by schools through programs that are primarily oriented to educational, rather than to clinical, psychotherapeutic processes.

I. N. Berlin (1964), for many years psychiatric consultant to the San Francisco City Schools, wisely advises in an article:

> I have become increasingly aware of the important therapeutic role of education for these children. Beginning to do school work does not solve all of their problems, but they do begin

> to feel themselves more competent, effective and hopeful individuals. . . . The most defended, withdrawn and alienated children, with whom many of us have worked . . . have proved the importance of educational measures as part of the treatment program. When these children begin to learn even the tiniest bit academically, they reflect this in reduction of their fears about the outer world. . . . Only through learning can they begin to feel more secure about themselves in their frightening world.

V

In conclusion, identity in childhood is influenced significantly by school experience. Children go to school eager to learn the ways of their elders, full of sensibilities to be encouraged and enriched, brimming with questions that raise other questions. In the schools of modern society, they will have their only chance to become self-respecting persons, defined to themselves and the world by their skills, values, and goals. A child's conscious and unconscious self, what he is and "through a glass darkly," what he feels he ought to be, is fashioned largely in family identifications. But what he knows and what he can do also shape identity in childhood. This part of human growth is the responsibility of the school. How well the child will fare as he makes his way through his life cycle in an industrial civilization depends on whether his guides encourage the scent for learning, or whether, through fear and boredom or sadistic revenge from life's disappointments, they dry it up.

If the tree of knowledge hangs full of oranges in childhood, what happens to make it so barren for some a few years later? It is not man's nature to allow the wells of imagination in him to wither as he grows. If formal learning ceases to become an adventure, then we must look to the ways it was arranged and to human circumstances in the school setting in which the child spent so much of his early life. The range of our diagnostic lenses at least must cover the teacher as psychological censor, the teacher as a withholder and giver of life, how learning is repressed in the mass setting, grouping and the child's image of mediocrity, inferiority in the identity of young boys, the creative unconscious, and hidden verbal ability.

Facilitating Development in the Preschool Child: Social and Psychological Perspectives

3

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This discussion will examine the psychosocial highways that crisscross the early life of the child and the socioeducational engineering that might facilitate and maximize human achievement.

Evidence clearly shows that a child's social experience is influential in his development and that the relationship between his experience and development is extremely complex. A continual interpenetration of environmental experience and psychological development occurs along a broad front. Simple cause and effect models cannot therefore be accurate.

Our society faces several compelling dilemmas and contradictions. Other periods have faced similar problems. The recent rapid development of automated, highly skilled, labor-reducing techniques, however, has revolutionary consequences for man's relationship to the social order, his work, leisure, and intellectual activity. Furthermore, technological advances in communications result in rapid dissemination of new knowledge. Thus the time in which institutional and personal adjustments change is greatly reduced. Deliberate planning of social conditions is called for to avoid or minimize the consequences of rapid change.

In a society of abundance, an amazingly large segment (20 to 40 percent) of our population is living in a subsociety of social, economic, and educational impoverishment (Harrington, 1963).

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Problems associated with marginal employment and crowded, dehumanizing living conditions are, of course, widespread in the lives of most people of the world. In this country, however, we have the facilities, the productive capacity, and some of the knowledge to reorient social development. The focus should be on the child to enable him to develop the requisite basic skills demanded by the new technology and changing social institutions.

The behavioral scientist and the educator together can effect changes in the school so that all children will be prepared for optimal social participation regardless of sex, race, ethnic group, and social class background. Problems in the schools reflect the current technological, racial, and urban conflicts created by rapid social change. The human sciences can become major instruments for the resolution of social conflicts since they are by their nature oriented toward change. The concept of intervention in social psychology and psychiatry, while new, suggests a basis for the construction of blueprints to harmonize human needs and cultural transformations.

The human sciences in general are moving from diagnosing to planning for remedial therapies concerned with primary prevention in mental illness, juvenile delinquency, and disabilities in learning and socialization. From this stage an orientation may develop toward assisting the individual to fulfill his intrinsic capacities for productive living and self-realization.

While the behavioral sciences and education have run parallel courses, they have not sufficiently interacted and enriched one another. What better way to investigate the development of learning processes, attitudes, or mental health than longitudinal studies of the school learner from nursery school through college? Just as medicine is the application of physiology, biochemistry, and similar sciences to human problems, education could be the application of the human sciences. As medicine continually circulates discoveries back to its basic sciences, so education could evaluate and validate principles and laws derived from the human sciences, leading to new understandings of human growth.

A crucial difference between education and psychiatry, sociology, and psychology must be recognized. The social sciences have an advantage in their newness and the challenge of problems in the current scene; education has the disadvantage of a long and encumbering history. Often it must operate through politically oriented bureaucracies which inhibit the potential for change to meet the social crises of the new urban America. Meaningful change even when agreed upon in the higher echelons is often prevented by barriers in communication and by restraints upon the classroom teacher. Gaps in the educational hierarchy separating the educator and his concepts from the classroom teacher and his ideas result in wasted energy and effort. Educational leaders must be free enough from bureaucratic restrictions to work with classroom teachers as a professional team and to move into new collaboration with the behavioral scientists. Only then can the growing knowledge of the sociopsychological development of the child be integrated into educational procedures to facilitate the realization of each child's intellectual and social potential.

Children from the economically and socially marginal segments of the community are most in need of help. These families are often caught in technological and social changes. In metropolitan areas they are the majority of the central city population, with the highest proportion of unemployment and welfare support. Their children are the dropouts, the reading problems, the reluctant learners. In the past these youths were absorbed by unskilled, low-paying jobs now being replaced by machines. Today to find any place in the job market, youth must learn more complex skills built upon a successful education. This is a central problem for the total community and a challenge for education. How it is met has wide ramifications outside our large cities and national boundaries.

Various approaches have been attempted to prevent learning disabilities and to facilitate intellectual growth. Recently, major curriculum renovations, enrichment programs, new systems for teaching mathematics and the sciences, programed courses, teaching machines, and a multiplicity of methods for teaching reading have been introduced. In the disadvantaged communities, however, where there are many underachievers, these methods are least applicable since they assume that the child has already attained the underlying skills. For the disadvantaged child this is an unwarranted assumption. While they may be appropriate for the middle class child, such innovations cannot substitute for the development of intrinsic motivation to intellectual mastery and achievement.

Planned intervention at earlier periods of intellectual development combines preventive and facilitating efforts. The influence of family background on the child's language patterns and cognitive development and the diffusion of this influence into all his academic and psychological performance has been well substantiated. Children from deprived backgrounds display inadequacies which can only be compensated by planned intervention channeled through improved schools.

A constellation of influences in lower class life limits the variety of experiences available to the child. Differing clusters of economic, social, and family influences are probably associated with the degree of retardation. Lower social class status predisposes to scholastic retardation, although not all children are equally affected. A description of the major features of urban slum life clarifies the educational deprivations of these children.

Crowded and dilapidated tenements are at quite a variance with the television image of how Americans live. Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, or poor mountain whites live in more or less segregated communities. Crowded apartments, chronic unemployment, economic insecurity, large numbers of broken families, and exposure to social ostracism, particularly for Negroes, is frequent. The education of adults tends to be limited, resulting in a nearly complete absence of books and toys in the homes and only a few home objects to use as playthings.

As families improve their income and opportunities they move out and up, removing the few contacts existing with patterns of the major culture. Social inequality, lack of accessible opportunities, and frequent absence of successful male models create an atmosphere nonconducive to children's development. The everyday problems of economic insecurity and large families leave the adults little time to assist the child in exploring the world, in successfully completing tasks, and in developing a sense of self-respect and worth. Even in unbroken homes, economic need often results in the father's working at two jobs, thus leaving little time for interaction with the family. Various studies indicate that these children have few planned or shared family activities, thus narrowing their range of experience.

Hunt (1961) points out the implications in his discussion of Piaget's development theories.

> . . . the rate of development is in substantial part, but certainly not wholly, a function of environmental circumstances. Change in circumstances is required to force the accommodative modifications of schemata that constitute development. Thus, the greater the variety of situations to which the child must accommodate his behavioral structures, the more differentiated and mobile they become. Thus, the more new things a child has seen and the more he has heard, the more things he is interested in seeing and hearing. Moreover, the more variation in reality with which he has coped, the greater is his capacity for coping. (pp. 258-59)

A compensatory enrichment program must provide this richness and variety.

Emphasis on the importance of variety in the environment implies the detrimental effects of lack of variety (Deutsch, 1963).

A child from any circumstance deprived of the variety of stimuli to which he is capable of responding is likely to be deficient in the equipment for school learning. He may not have been restricted in *quantity* of stimulation but in *variety*. Children from these backgrounds tend to have less systematic ordering of stimulation which is therefore less useful to the growth of cognition.

The school is the most promising agency for providing environmental compensation. This institution reaches every child and can most efficiently organize and program the needed stimulation for learning, maturation, and acculturation. Yet 60 percent of lower class children are estimated to be two or more years retarded in reading when they leave the elementary school.

Entire responsibility, however, cannot be placed on the school. Studies of the relationship between social class background and school learning or performance clearly indicate that in the first grade many children are already behind in skills necessary for school success. Upon entrance they are less prepared to meet the demands of the classroom and the school. The school too has failed these children. The failure to overcome environmental handicaps results in early failure, increasing alienation, and a greater gap between lower and middle class children in their school progress. Intellectual and achievement differences are smallest in the first grade and increase through the elementary school. Instead of compensating for deficiencies in the early environment, school experience accentuates the child's handicap.

The child must be prepared to meet the school's demands before he enters the first grade and experiences an accumulation of failure. The school must accept this responsibility. This cannot be accomplished by mandate; new knowledge and appropriate techniques derived from the behavioral sciences can be put to effective use.

All people have difficulty in spanning cultural discontinuities. The child's entrance into school places him in an environment which is often discontinuous with his home. This discontinuity is minimal for the middle class child. He has had the importance of school emphasized from an early age. For him the school is central and continuous with his background. There are fewer inconsistencies, and he has been sensitized to intrinsic motivation. The school-faculty orientation is similar to his home-family orientation. Failure is interpreted to him, and ways of coping with it through increasing motivation or rewards and punishments are familiar.

The lower class child does not recognize the same continuity. He has not learned the same coping mechanisms for internalizing success or surviving failure in a formal learning setting. When the lower class child starts to fail he does not have the same significant and relevant support from his family, community, or school. And because of his lack of preparation he is more likely to fail!

White's (1959) concept of competence as a primary motivation applies here. The middle class child comes to school prepared to meet its demands. His teachers also expect him to succeed. As he confronts activities appropriate to his already attained skills, he succeeds and achieves the feeling of efficacy so necessary to continuing positive interaction. The lower class child, on the other hand, sees the middle-class-oriented school as discontinuous with his home and comes to it unprepared in the required skills. The school makes puzzling demands; failures are frequent. As feelings of incompetency increase, motivation decreases and the school loses influence.

In the transition from preschool to elementary school the child is first influenced by the requirements of the broader culture. Two environments are always present, the home and the school.

In the transitional and pretransitional years the young organism is most malleable. At this point, efforts are best initiated to provide an intervention to reconcile the home and the school. The child from a disadvantaged background faces wide discrepancies. Preventive and remedial measures can eliminate or overcome the negative effects.

Fowler (1962) emphasizes the importance of early intervention and points out that minimal cognitive stimulation in the preschool years when appropriate to the child's abilities can be effective in development of intelligence.

Critical and optimal periods of development and learning in human beings and animals have been studied for many years. Stimulation alone is not sufficient; the time at which it is provided determines its effectiveness. Efforts to compensate for deprivation must be supplied at a particular time to have the desired effects. A program to compensate for environmental deprivation is most effective when supplied at a particular stage.

Scott's (1962) summary indicates that the period of greatest plasticity is during initial socialization. The research is mainly with animals and generalizations must be cautious. At the higher phylogenetic levels, the organism has higher levels of plasticity and receptivity. Data to hypothesize the critical period for human learning is insufficient, and there may be different critical or optimal periods. At three or four years of age, a period roughly similar to Piaget's "pre-operational stage" appears. The child is undergoing socialization and is now required to focus attention, to respond to auditory and visual stimuli, and to learn to use language symbolization. At this age an organized and systematic learning program might prepare the child for success in the more formal demands of the school. At this early age the compensation for previous deprivations can be most effective. The interaction of motivational and maturational dynamics makes it imperative for such social institutions as the school to offer an organized and orderly program as early as possible to compensate for deficit. Deficits must be compensated for because the deprivations associated with poverty are disintegrative and limit normal growth. Academic failure and reading retardation are associated with lower class status particularly within minority groups. The relationship between social conditions and learning and the failure of the school to reverse cumulative failures in the primary grades must be examined.

The work of the Institute for Developmental Studies has been directed to the effects of life conditions upon cognition. The role of specific social experiences in the development of language, concept formation and organization, visual and auditory discrimination, general orientation, and self-concepts influencing motivation is related to school performance. All of these are essential to the acquisition of scholastic skills and should be the basis of a curriculum for early education of disadvantaged children.

Research yields no justification or explanation for any child with an intact brain, who is not severely disturbed, to fail to learn the basic scholastic skills. The failure of children to learn is the failure of the schools to develop curriculums consistent with the experiential backgrounds of children and their abilities and disabilities.

A compensatory program at three or four years of age could prevent future disabilities and remedy current deficiencies. Such programs could also minimize discontinuities between home and school, enhancing the child's adjustment to school.

Language is crucial in concept formation, problem solving, and relating to and interpreting the environment. Current data indicate that differences between social classes in perceptual abilities and general orientation decrease with age while differences in language power increase.

Bernstein's study (1960) pointed out that the lower class tends to use informal language to convey concrete needs and immediate consequences while the middle class language is more formal and related to abstract concepts. This might explain our recent findings that the middle class child in the fifth grade is superior to the lower class child in tasks requiring precise and abstract language. The gap in communication also exists between the middle class teacher and the lower class child.

The absence of structured routines and activities in the home is reflected in the lower class child's difficulty in structuring language. In nursery school and kindergarten these children need emphasis upon verbalized routines and regulations to build the child's expectations and to fulfill them. Verbal usage is increased with more interaction with adults and other children.

In lower class homes, speech sequences are often temporally limited and poorly structured syntactically. The children's language patterns are weak in syntactical organization and continuity. Analysis of language, however, in the first and fifth grades indicates that the lower class child has more expressive language than is generally recognized or emerges in the classroom. With stimulation, a high level of expressive language is used by children who display syntactive defects. The differences in language usage, therefore, appear to be by-products of social experience rather than indexes of intelligence or basic ability. In any preschool enrichment program, training in the use of word sequences to relate and unify ideas is essential.

One kind of such training is the provision of a rich individualized language environment where words are repeatedly placed in meaningful context. The child is offered many opportunities for expressing as well as receiving language in optimal conditions and is encouraged to respond. Stress is placed on orienting feedback. If the child asks, "Give me the——" or "Where is the ——?" the teacher consciously demonstrates a complete sentence including direction, location, placement, and context. Systematic efforts to increase vocabulary include sorting of symbols, pictures, and articles with letters and words, practice in labeling and construction, or completion of stories using specified objects or events. Language activities are used to improve memory, auditory discrimination, and general orientation.

Compensatory programs are based on the assumption that retardation results from inadequately prepared children and inappropriate curriculums. Most of the children's failures are not due to inferior innate resources. The solution is not to wait for children to "unfold" but to recognize that growth requires stimulation and guidance particularly when home influences have been weak.

Enrichment programs of course are not limited to the preschool years but should be continued. The preschool program does not mean that additional enrichment for marginal youngsters through the elementary years will not be necessary. Communities must support kindergartens with reasonable enrollments, adequate equipment, and specially trained staff. The child from the enriched preschool and kindergarten might remain in an ungraded group through the third grade.

Fowler (1962) points out that—

> The advantages of utilizing the now relatively untapped "pre-school" years for cognitive education are, of course, manifest. Most obvious, is the availability of more years of childhood to absorb the increasingly complex technology of modern society, a technology already requiring many of the more productive years of development to acquire. A second is the less evident but more crucial possibility that conceptual learning sets, habit patterns, and interest areas, may well be more favorably established at early than at later stages of the developmental cycle. (pp. 145-46)

Some people seem to fear the word *cognitive*, perhaps rightly so, because of reaction to mechanical models of the past.

These models are not what is meant. The realization of human resources through stimulating the cognitive growth of children could be a primary method for developing positive self-attitudes Such emphasis in the early years is especially pressing for the lower class child if deficits in experience are not to accumulate and permeate his entire functioning.

As Hunt (1961) says, "the problem for the management of child development is to find out how to govern the encounters that children have with their environments to foster both an optimally rapid rate of intellectual development and a satisfying life" (pp. 362-63).

The curriculum should serve both the primary prevention of social deviancy related to deprivation and the stimulation of healthy growth and use of the individual's abilities. Such orientation offers opportunities for all people to break the chains of social and historical limits that have been externally imposed. The immediate significance of compensatory programs to current critical questions in race relations and in public education is self-evident.

Grouping as a Factor in Failure 4

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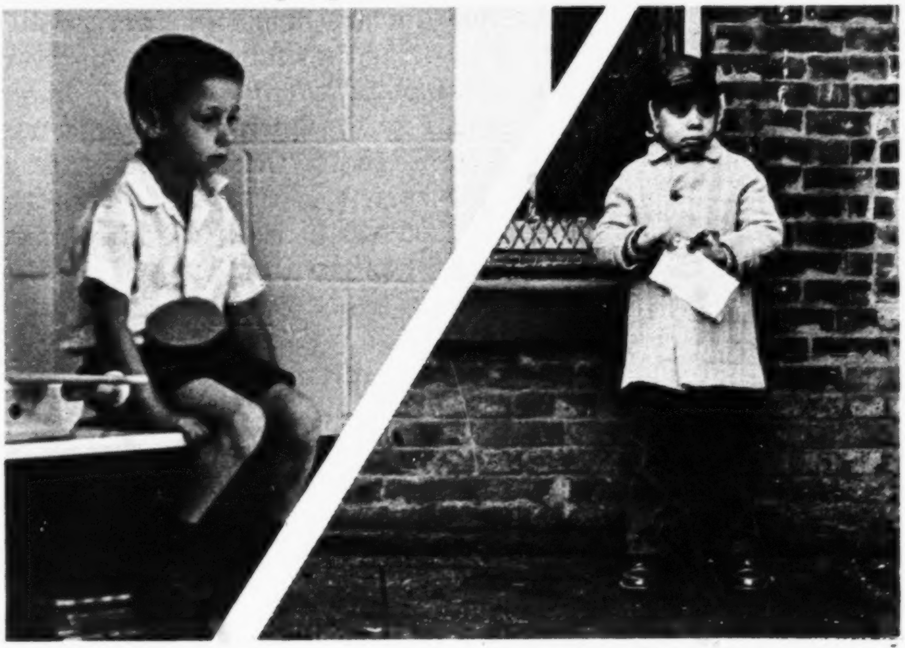
Many educators have become justly concerned about the negative outcomes that grouping practices, often labeled homogeneous or ability grouping, have for advantaged as well as disadvantaged children.

Where disadvantaged children make up a segment of the school, attention to the procedures used in grouping will prevent de facto segregation. Time-honored methods of grouping on the basis of intelligence tests, general academic ability, or even teacher judgments often promote de facto segregation (Bettelheim, 1958; Striet, 1964). De facto segregation by classroom in the elementary school is to be rejected on the same grounds as segregation. For as the Supreme Court stated in 1954, "We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal . . ." (Clark, 1963). From social and psychological evidence the Court concluded segregation of children immediately labels one group inferior.

Segregation resulting from grouping harms not only those labeled inferior but also limits the contacts of all children. Limited personal contact is a prime contributor to the stereotypes which exist among ethnic groups and socioeconomic classes. Elmo Roper reports in one of his surveys that many of the highly prejudiced had never spoken to a recipient of their hate (*Opinion Polls,* 1962). Coles's (1963) research with students, who were in integrated classes for the first time, found their prejudice

Lost in the classroom group.



Ignored on the playground.

diminished despite the social pressures of the community and the images which students brought to the new situation.

Claims that increased achievement results from so-called homogeneous grouping have not been substantiated. Significant evidence on students' self-appraisals as a result of ability grouping reveals little to recommend it (Luchins and Luchins, 1948; Mann, 1960). The feelings of inferiority, the early falsely based appraisals act as determinants on personality development. For disadvantaged children, who need support and positive reassurance of their worth, ability grouping contributes to the unfortunate circumstances which already plague their lives (Harrington, 1963; Lewis, 1961). The grouping arrangement teaches both consciously and unconsciously the school's estimate of children's worth. Feelings of inferiority will inevitably occur because they are inherent in the ability-grouping policy itself. The enthusiasts for ability grouping gloss over these destructive learnings.

Disadvantaged children in heterogeneous classes may, to be sure, develop feelings of inferiority, especially if insensitive teachers make odious comparisions.

Advantages in any plan of grouping must provide research which guarantees no obstacle to positive personality development. The development of personality reflects group membership and teacher appraisal (Luchins and Luchins, 1948). Learning opportunities are enhanced by arrangements which accept the wide variety of traits represented in any group.

Opponents of homogeneous grouping are sometimes scoffed at by advocates who say that such opposition in the name of democracy is based upon sentimentality. Advocates of homogeneous grouping, however, should inquire into their own passionate advocacy of ability grouping in terms of results as measured by improved intelligence and achievement. Have they not enshrined an ideology, antidemocratic in sentiment and devastating in its consequences? (Luchins and Luchins, 1948.) Grouping arrangements should enhance rather than diminish the democratic ideal.

The same thinking should be applied to grouping within the class. To facilitate class grouping and provide individual attention, class size should be limited to twenty-five or fewer children. Studies have found that disadvantaged children face many problems of social relationship and lack oral language facility. Their need for individual interest and attention cannot be met in large classes (Deutsch, 1960; Riessman, 1962).

The following criteria for grouping procedures have been based on research. The criteria assume that provision has been made for deviant children.

1. *Classes should contain a broad socioeconomic group that reflects the total school population.* Homogeneous grouping practices tend to divide children by socioeconomic class. In the typical three sections, the low potential group usually contains an overrepresentation of children from the socioeconomically disadvantaged group. The public's reaction often suggests that this pernicious by-product is viewed as desirable. "If we can't have segregated schools, then we'll have segregated classes," seems to be a way to preserve the status quo. Groups resistant to integration demand homogeneous grouping, thus opening the door to segregation within the integrated school.

The Princeton Plan found that sectioning practices resulted in placement of most Negroes in the low section. The study revealed that the general section was the "dummy" section and as one child said, lots of people, including the Negroes, say that is where most of us belong (Striet, 1964).

Socioeconomic segregation illustrates *the law of salience.* The law of salience maintains that group membership heightens feelings about those characteristics that are used to distinguish the group. In ability grouping these are (a) socioeconomic status and (b) a rigid classification of academic ability.

Every day as pupils meet in these discouraging classes, their inadequacy, their bleak and limited future, their unimportance is relentlessly emphasized. A society that provides social mobility and opens opportunity to all cannot justify school practices which are inimical to the democratic principles on which our government was established.

Promotion of social understanding, intellectual stimulation, and feelings of mutual trust and equality result only from interaction of human beings in classes, schools, and communities (Havighurst, 1963).

2. *Classes should contain a range of intellectual abilities and scholastic achievements.* Many studies find no significant difference in achievement when ability grouping is used. Such grouping fails to recognize that each child has a wide range of differences in intrapersonal traits. The range of differences between children is equally great. An abundance of evidence has been amassed to prove that in arriving at a general measure of intelligence the specific traits involved may be widely different (Suppes, 1964).

Segregation of disadvantaged children frequently results from a mistaken interpretation of general measures of ability or achievement. Other countries seem more aware of this discrepancy. Significant evidence appears in the growing research literature on the result of ability grouping and on achievement in heterogeneous groups (Husén, 1960; Husén and Svensson, 1960; Rudd, 1958).

Haggard demonstrated that cultural backgrounds handicap many children in their responses to group tests. With a few hours of practice, the scores of these children rose dramatically (Riessman, 1962). When success is based on speed of response, the child is handicapped by cultural patterns in which curiosity is muted and in which caution in approaching new experiences is taught.

While individual cases do not prove the rule, they lend poignancy lost in statistics. A fourth-grade teacher tells about Nathan who entered the fourth grade with a record of 97 on a group intelligence test. His classroom performance led the teacher to doubt the accuracy of the score. Nathan read above grade level and commanded a large vocabulary. The teacher sought help from a psychologist who gave Nathan an individual intelligence test on which he scored 139. Without the teacher's intervention, the group score might have been used to determine his placement in junior high school.

An excellent guide to the use and interpretation of test data for the disadvantaged has been developed by a committee for the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (Journal of Social Issues, 1964). The committee states that standardized tests currently in use present three principal difficulties when used with disadvantaged children:

1. They may not provide reliable differentiation in the range of minority scores.
2. Their predictive validity range for minority groups may be quite different from that for the standardization and validity groups.
3. The validity of their interpretation is strongly dependent upon an adequate understanding of the social and cultural background of the group in question.

These guidelines would mitigate many of the injustices stemming from the misuse of test results.

Grouping which attempts to narrow the range of ability within classes disregards the fact that children learn from each other. The teacher is not the sole repository of wisdom. Because children learn much from each other, differences can stimulate motivation. In investigating problem solving it was found that groups of adults with the widest differences were more successful than those which were more homogeneous. Skill in the problem-solving process is of tremendous importance to the educated person. We may be restricting the possibilities for learning to solve problems when we narrow differences. When teachers are faced with obvious differences, they devise teaching procedures that make positive use of differences. Teachers are inclined to assume false similarities when confronted with homogeneous groups.

3. *Classes should contain a balance of aggressive and nonaggressive children.* Balancing class groups with children whose characteristic behavior is aggressive or nonaggressive will produce a climate stimulating to wholesome personality development. The extremes are modified as children observe one another and learn acceptable behaviors.

Grouping practices often foster placement of aggressive children in the lower group, where they stimulate each other. Group norms of behavior antithetical to instruction may become established. Tacit acknowledgment of the discipline problems created by homogeneous grouping is expressed as teachers bargain. They say, "If you'll take the low group this year, I'll give you the top group next year."

Balanced grouping has proved valuable in group psychotherapy; hyperaggression of some is controlled while the introverted are drawn out. In learning to live with others, all children need to become aware of the needs of others, to develop sensitivity to differences, and to appreciate differences as having great human value.

When many aggressive children are grouped together, the problem of classroom control can consume an inordinate amount of the teacher's time. As a result, children may fail to maintain achievement and fall lower in subsequent achievement scores (Deutsch, 1960).

4. *Classes should have a balance of boys and girls.* The ratio of boys and girls can be critical from the standpoint of organization and instruction. The disadvantaged boy in particular suffers from the deprivation of a male in the family. His socialization seems lower and his reaction to instruction seems to be different from that of a girl. He is apt to have more problems in reading and allied language activities. About an equal number of boys and girls assists a teacher in setting behavior standards and models for children's learning. Where boys predominate, norms of behavior disruptive to a climate for learning may win group support.

An outstanding fourth-grade teacher, for example, was having difficulty in organizing learning activities. Small group instruction was difficult. The larger group was a source of disturbance. Teaming students for work posed many problems. The general unrest was pervasive. Procedures successful in the past did not produce comparable results. The class had 28 boys and 10 girls. Because of previous success, the teacher had been assigned many "discipline problems." A ratio between boys and girls would have created a desirable balance.

Teacher judgment is significant when used with other criteria. Socioeconomic bias sometimes enters into teacher judgments of children. If unaware of their biases, teachers may judge pupils in terms of their own values rather than on the bases of an objective appraisal.

When the teachers were asked to estimate pupils' intelligence, friendship patterns, and similar data, Spindler found that many teachers exhibit a strong socioeconomic bias. Teachers often overestimate children of socioeconomic status similiar to or higher than their own and underestimate others (Rudd, 1958). The impact of this for the child's educational opportunities is apparent as the teacher manages a room, assigns tasks, organizes groups, and chooses individuals for responsibilities.

Grouping based upon intelligence tests, achievement scores, or unanalyzed teacher judgments frequently denies full educational opportunity to disadvantaged children (Rockefeller Brothers Fund, 1958).

Evaluating Children's Growth 5

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Evaluation is concerned not only with children's growth in ability to use the basic skills (the traditional "three R's") but also with their growth in the attitudes, knowledge, and self-concepts essential for effective living in our culture. When considering children who are likely to face difficulty in school, the evaluation of attitudes and feelings about self is particularly important. These children often come to school with depreciatory attitudes about themselves as learners. Such attitudes result in their reluctance to take part in activities or their resistance to the teacher's influence. Many of these children have little confidence in themselves and harbor feelings of self-distrust which interfere with response to learning. Unless the teacher attempts to understand and modify these attitudes and discover ways to have evaluative procedures become security-giving rather than ego-threatening events, early failure in school is almost assured.

In the Roaring Twenties, described by some as the wonderful decade of nonsense, the nation's public schools embarked upon extensive standardized achievement and intelligence testing programs as a means of assessing its youth. Like an ax, these testing programs can be either a useful tool or a deadly weapon. For children from backgrounds which have put them at a disadvantage in language, test results are often a means of cutting off further stimulation and development. Intelligence quotients and percentile scores become synonymous with "being in the slow group" where little is expected. Children know this and so do their teachers. And because little is expected, often little is ac-

Self-evaluation with the teacher.

Why didn't it work?

complished. These expectations persist in the face of mounting evidence that such judgment rests upon precarious reasoning.

The psychologists who first developed the IQ instruments we now use recognized them as rough predictors of school success rather than valid measures of intelligence. Academic aptitude is particularly sensitive to environmental stimulation and deprivation. Furthermore, we know from a growing number of longitudinal studies that the assessment of one's IQ is a "tricky business" and that during a child's elementary and high school years his intelligence quotient may vary as much as twenty to thirty points. At a time when a difference of five points may distinguish between the "haves" and "have nots," the growing hopes of some children may be killed at an early age merely through the statistical chances of the assessment world. Too often intelligence quotients are used to classify children rather than to help understand them. Some talents are not amenable to test scores or test batteries. Studies of successful and eminent people reveal that such personal attributes as persistence, courage, vitality, and determination rather than academic aptitudes alone are the ingredients of successful performance in and out of school. Neither do the traditional intelligence tests successfully identify types of talents, such as the creative, the administrative, the communicators, the managerials, and the social engineers. All these factors suggest that the safest approach a teacher can use while considering the results of a group intelligence test approximates the following: "This pupil has at *least* this potential; undoubtedly he has more; an important part of my job is to challenge him to reveal how much more."

Through observation, conferences with parents, and study of school records, the teacher attempts to remove those barriers which prevent children from functioning more effectively. The responsibility of the school staff—teachers, administrators, counselors, and curriculum specialists—is to challenge our present mediocre and outmoded means of predicting children's development. If we begin our work *now*, with three- and four-year-olds of certain socioeconomic groups, we have a powerful chance to be influential in canceling out deprivations that will otherwise affect every aspect of their lives. We must rid ourselves of unfounded assumptions about learning ceilings, interest levels, and the grouping of children. The successful educator knows that achievement in school is conditioned mainly by—

The educational philosophy of the school's staff and the degree to which that philosophy is practiced.

The qualifications of the school's staff, the methods of instruction, and the kinds and amounts of special services and instructional materials.

The socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds of the child's family.

The size, wealth, location, and socioeconomic setting of the community in which the school operates.

Some teachers are proficient in utilizing test results and other evaluative procedures as ways of improving instruction in the basic skills. They recognize a wide range in abilities within their classrooms, among the pupils of their respective schools, and among other schools within their school district. They view test results as clues toward—

Understanding the range of abilities and achievement in the classroom.

Diagnosing gaps in essential prerequisite knowledge and skills.

Identifying specific blocks which prevent some children from making the next step in learning.

Selecting materials of appropriate difficulty for the range of abilities and achievement in the classroom.

Locating specific difficulties that need additional teaching emphasis.

Identifying children who are performing below their potential.

Grouping children on the basis of identified learning needs, rather than long-term general or track "levels."

Other efforts by administrative and instructional personnel can marshal knowledge of test results to clarify certain problems that have been with us too long. Some of these problems are indicated in the following questions:

How can test results help identify the potential dropout with high potential for learning?

Why do girls generally outscore boys in academic ability and standardized tests, and what are the implications for curriculum planning?

How do districts, and schools within a district, perform in relation to socioeconomic-cultural factors, including potential academic abilities?

What services and materials can be extended to those schools that yield markedly low scores in academic and achievement abilities?

The involvement of parents in evaluation programs is crucial. Schools should carefully appraise the extent to which parents are involved in school programs through such activities as parent-teacher conferences, parent aides to schools, parent enrichment groups, dad's organizations, neighborhood improvement groups, and family recreational activities. Many parents feel that they are not being given sufficient information for them to understand their children's progress, their educational problems, and the solutions being attempted by the school. In general, these parents want to know:

How is my child doing in school?

Does the teacher know the individual characteristics of my child?

Are these individual characteristics being considered in the program?

What can I (the parent) do to help?

A number of research studies indicate a definite correlation between a youngster's image of himself and his achievement in school. The process by which he develops his concept of self involves the persons with whom he is in contact and their acceptance or rejection of him as a person. Their relationship to and feeling about him directly affect his feeling toward himself. The interplay with the child of his home, school, and community represents stumbling blocks or stepping stones in his growth and development processes. Since people constitute the major influences in a child's life, the understanding, love, and acceptance of those closest to him aids in his formation of feelings of who he is. The child's first idea of himself is a reflection of the parents' idea of him. This is significantly related to the adjustment of the child.

The role of the classroom teacher in developing children's self-concepts is also a vital one. It is said that the teacher can be perhaps the strongest, most positive motivational "technique" in the classroom. Education can facilitate human development by providing an educational program which enables youngsters to develop self-concepts useful for effective living and full lives. The school *must* offer opportunities for success. The quality of inner strength and stimuli that evolves from success in school can act as both long- and short-term motivation. Each child should experience success daily. It is imperative that—

The teacher be aware of the importance of self-concept and cultural relativism (how it relates to behavior).

The classroom climate permit the youngster to make mistakes without feeling a sense of failure.

An atmosphere exist where he can develop to his maximum ability.

Intellectual stimulation and personal gratification be a definite part of the classroom environment.

In evaluation, teachers should be as concerned about children's attitudinal changes as about their academic progress. In short, the teacher asks how the individual feels toward himself, his peers, and adults at the end of a term as compared with the beginning of the school year. Most of the evaluative techniques considered in textbooks and teacher training programs are concerned with measures of academic aptitudes and abilities. They are designed to determine what the individual does in a specific test situation and assume that all have similar motivations. Teachers are generally more familiar with these appraisal procedures than with methods that attempt to measure what an individual will do under more natural circumstances. Experiences within the classroom as well as those outside the classroom—for example, in the cafeteria, on the playground, in the library, in the auditorium, and on field trips—provide normal situations for evaluating many phases of learning. Many appraisal procedures adaptable to these kinds of situations are available to school personnel. Among these procedures are anecdotal records, rating scales, checklists, individual autobiographies and diaries, open-end questions, unfinished stories about particular problem situations, and sociometric procedures designed to study relationships existing in the group.

The degree to which a school's evaluation program is concerned not only with growth in ability to use the basic skills but also with growth in attitudes and values needed for effective living in our country can be determined by the staff's reactions to these questions:

How can a person feel liked unless somebody likes him?

How can a person feel wanted unless somebody wants him?

How can a person feel acceptable unless somebody accepts him?

How can a person feel able unless somewhere he has some success?

How can a person feel important unless he is important to someone?

How do you ask about these feelings?

How do you change your instructional procedures when you find out?

As the evaluation movement enters its second half-century, it enters a world in which the turn of a television dial can take one from a ballet to the middle of a conference on a pitcher's mound and where one can drive about in a push-button car while dinner is being cooked by the automatic push-button stove. It is not surprising, then, to find a faith and belief by some in push-button solutions for quality education. New ages bring new demands requiring the concern of school personnel and the attention of the community. Our nation is confronted with a vast amount of test data showing that wide differences exist among its schools. As we enter the mid-1960's, socioscience investigators have bared the harsh reality that the differences from school to school and community to community exist largely because of inequalities in socioeconomic and cultural input factors, none of which will disappear by push-button controls. What, then, do we do? In short, can our communities hold the mirror to their faces and systematically move toward improvement of the long-neglected conditions that affect educational output? The task is extremely important because the times demand that we learn more, learn it faster, apply it more skillfully, and include all socioeconomic groups in such educational endeavors. At the moment, the people living in a free and representative government are a minority group on this earth. An eroded or abused democratic value, an undiscovered talent, a wasted skill, a misapplied ability in any of their people is a threat to their survival. Indeed, upon our ability to solve this problem rests, in part, our fate as a free people.

The Education Of Teachers 6

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If the preparation of professional personnel is to give support to the prevention of failure in schools, then greater emphasis must be given to developing the ability of teachers to assess every child's readiness for learning. Such ability rests on a wide range of understandings including:

1. Recognition of the cultures from which children come, the ways in which children from each cultural background are alike and different, and the influence of the particular culture on how a child perceives and responds to school experiences.
2. Knowledge of the dynamics of human growth and development as a basis for understanding and accepting the child and for adapting expectations to each child's uniqueness.
3. Acquaintance with research on the physiological, psychological, and social factors affecting each child's learning.
4. Skill in imaginative teaching designed to make learning a positive experience for the child who is not motivated to learn because of successive and frustrating encounters with failure.
5. Appreciation of the significant role the family plays in the child's life and in his attitude toward learning.
6. Acceptance of the role to work empathetically with parents to enhance their ability to support the child as a learner.
7. Recognition that teachers' attitudes, motivations, and prejudices affect their ability to help children.
8. Acceptance of the teachers' responsibility to build rapport despite the child's handicapping attitude toward school, to utilize

Guide learning.

Get involved with children.

every means that makes learning easier for the child, and to persist in methods designed to stir his interest in learning.

Above all, teacher education should inspire an attitude which places value on learning at whatever age it takes place. It should foster a dedication to teaching which can never degrade or classify in a mean and contemptible category vulnerable children who have special learning needs. Teacher education should stir such a sense of pride in the social significance of teaching that the greater the opportunity to release and cultivate the unfulfilled promise of young minds, the greater the teacher's realization of personal and professional satisfaction.

Prospective teachers should have a variety of well-planned experiences with children from many cultural backgrounds. Such experiences may include observation and participation in community youth agency programs, work in summer camps, service to children of seasonal agricultural workers, field trips with children from multicultural neighborhoods, evening study centers for socioeconomically disadvantaged children and youth.

Students preparing for teaching should have scheduled observation of well-qualified teachers of educationally handicapped children and should be helped to analyze the process of working with children's problems, building sound relationships, and relating skillful teaching to successful outcomes in terms of children's behavior.

Counseling, which provides practical assistance, should be provided for all prospective teachers. Such counseling should function to enhance feelings of worth, value, and competence; it should build on each individual's strengths and encourage him to define his goals and purposes and to work toward the solution of his problems. Effective counseling helps the prospective teacher through evaluation, guidance, and leadership to broaden his knowledge, understanding, and teaching skills; it encourages and inspires him to be a free creative human being.

TEACHER PLACEMENT

Administrators responsible for the assignment of teachers to work with disadvantaged children are confronted with a most serious task. The teacher is the key resource in providing the child's learning environment, both physical and social. More enters into the selection of the teacher than basic qualifications in training or experience. The administrator must know the school well; he must know the personal and professional qualifications of the teachers. The right teacher must be matched with the right group of children. The teacher must know and be completely willing to accept assignment to a group of children whose past experiences have tended to alienate or have actually alienated them from formal school learning. Success cannot be expected where children and teachers are mismatched.

What guidelines may an administrator use in striving to make an assignment advantageous to the teacher and the children? A knowledgeable administrator will make every effort to—

1. Assign a teacher to a school that operates on a philosophy similar to that teacher's.
2. Give the teacher a choice to accept or to reject the assignment without prejudice to subsequent placement.
3. Assure the teacher freedom to plan and to work creatively in terms of the needs, limitations, abilities, and interests of the group.
4. Create a system-wide acceptance and support of the program so that a teacher will not lose professional status by service to this important group.
5. Assure the teacher that essential professional assistance, equipment, and supplies will be available.

The most desirable assignment occurs when the teacher is selected on the basis of his interest in and understanding and acceptance of the cultural backgrounds of the children, his recognition of his personal motivation in accepting the assignment, and his skill in adapting his expectations and methods to the learning patterns of the children. When a teacher is able to accept the children as they are as a basis for planning for their group, the possibility that growth will occur can almost be a foregone conclusion. The teacher who views with optimism the potential learnings of disadvantaged children in an optimal setting creates a climate that augers well for success. The teacher who is capable of establishing himself as the leader of a group brought together to learn and who has the spirit to face the task with enthusiasm, confidence, self-reliance, and a sense of challenge is well endowed with the elements that make for success in any situation.

Teachers whose own roots are in a minority group or in a lower socioeconomic background may have the advantage of being able to understand and interpret values which are in conflict with those of typical middle class teachers. They may find it easier to identify with the background influences in the attitudes of these children toward school and may know how best to stimulate them to learn. Some, however, who have overcome difficulties in their own lives may have unreasonable expectations that all children should achieve in the same way.

IN-SERVICE EDUCATION

Few teachers now engaged in teaching have had opportunity for firsthand contact with the realities of the world in which socioeconomically underprivileged children live. Teachers are frequently at a loss to understand the attitudes toward school and education these children have acquired. Their strengths and potentials for learning are hidden under behaviors which seem inexplicable to teachers.

Specially planned programs of in-service education provide ways by which teachers can gain new insight into what these children are like. Planning to develop a school program for children from the impoverished areas of a community will enlist teachers in productive activities of surveying local needs, deepening their understanding of available resources, and challenging the socially minded to find ways to enhance their professional relationship with these vulnerable children in ways to prevent them from experiencing failure.

School systems are currently testing a wide variety of promising techniques for in-service education. Among those that seem to yield results in terms of changed methods and attitudes are (a) extension courses and workshops, (b) staff conferences in individual schools, (c) utilization of resource specialists, and (d) observation of effective teaching.

Extension courses and workshops. The success of an extension course or workshop depends upon the quality of the leadership provided. An extension course spread over a period of several months provides opportunity for the teacher to test suggested innovations and secure the reaction of the instructor and colleagues on reported outcomes. A workshop of two or three weeks duration can be scheduled during a time when the teacher is free from teaching responsibility and can give undivided attention to the problem. In either case, the program should help teachers gain understanding of—

1. Current professional literature concerning the disadvantaged child.
2. The subcultures which the children represent and their implications for teaching and learning.
3. How the deprived child has learned to cope with the difficulties of his life.
4. Ways to develop in children positive social attitudes and skills.
5. Ways to develop incentive or motivation.
6. Ways to involve parents in their children's education.
7. How children perceive teachers.
8. Qualities likely to lead to success in teaching disadvantaged children.
9. Methods of studying individual children.

Staff conferences. Again, with competent leadership, staff conferences in individual schools can be most valuable since the focus is on needs and problems with which the staff must cope daily. The staff can engage in a problem census and list topics according to the staff's judgment of priority. Members of the staff may volunteer to study a particular problem prior to the staff conference and even prepare a position paper to concentrate major discussion on the significant issues. The topics a staff might consider sufficiently important to justify a staff conference include—

1. Discipline; realistic definition of standards of behavior.
2. Language development.
3. Individual studies of children.
4. Ways to improve listening skills.
5. Identification of individual aspirations, abilities, and educational needs.
6. Opportunities for firsthand experiences.
7. Individual and group guidance methods.
8. Methods of evaluating and reporting pupil progress to parents.

Resource specialists. Many urban areas serving large numbers of vulnerable children are in reasonable proximity to leading colleges and universities that have on their staff experts in all the disciplines. More and more, these experts are making themselves available as resources in helping to solve persistent societal and educational problems. In addition, many local industrial, commercial, health, and social welfare organizations have experts who are willing to place their competency at the service of the schools and the community. In surveying an area for available resources, school systems will be looking for individuals in these categories:

1. Curriculum consultants in art, music, physical education, and the use of all materials of instruction
2. Psychologists, social workers, health educators, physicians, nurses, speech therapists, and other health and welfare personnel
3. Specialists in parent education
4. Specialists in community organization
5. Social scientists and others with knowledge of cultural, psychological, and sociological backgrounds.

Observation of teaching. One of the most rewarding ways to employ time devoted to in-service education is to observe a teacher who has achieved outstanding success in working with culturally disadvantaged children. Following observation an analysis should be made in a competently guided discussion. The focus of the discussion should primarily call attention to—

1. Ways the teacher used teaching methods particularly well adapted to the special requirements of the group.
2. Methods used in establishing pupil-teacher and pupil-pupil relationships in ways conducive to learning.
3. Procedures the teacher has used with the children in the creation of an environment which is a genuine laboratory for learning.
4. Provisions made by the teacher for the basic drives to learning, including stimulation of interest and curiosity, physical activity, manipulation and construction, sharing and communicating, dramatic recreation of experience, and creative aesthetic expression.
5. Evidence of the potential growth inherent in the group and the successes which can be achieved.

ADMINISTRATIVE PLANNING

The most significant factor in any teaching-learning relationship is the success of the school system in reducing the incidence of failure. This is largely determined by the wisdom and determination that characterizes administrative planning.

Efforts to build a program that attacks the self-perpetuating causes of school failures must stem from administrative interest and concern about the problem and result in action which expresses this concern in practical planning.

The success of teachers' efforts to improve the education of disadvantaged children depends on administrative support expressed through—

1. Recognition of the importance of improving the school's influence on the disadvantaged child.
2. Development of pilot programs to stimulate teachers' interest in preventing school failure and to demonstrate effective teaching skills and materials.
3. Encouragement of creative classroom innovations which depart from traditional approaches.
4. Provision for flexibility of curriculum and adaptation of standards to the needs of educationally deprived children.
5. Stimulation of involvement of entire school staff in reducing school failure.
6. Development of team approach to help children who have learning difficulty by utilizing teacher, nurse, principal, psychologist, and curriculum specialists in devising a course of action.
7. Provisions of increased supplementary services of social workers, guidance specialists, curriculum specialists, and parent educators to give intensive help to teachers, children, and families.
8. Establishment of a class size that facilitates giving individual help to children.
9. Provision of extensive and varied teaching aids to involve children in firsthand learning experiences; music materials, audiovisual and science equipment, and auxiliary instructional materials are needed.
10. Provision for experimental summer school programs with groups organized around special interests.

No problem of greater magnitude confronts American society than providing the conditions so that every human being can achieve his potential. This means communities profoundly concerned and willing to support, psychologically and financially, a program of action to meet the needs of disadvantaged children in our society. It means sensitive administrators dedicated to the education of all the children of all the people. It means teachers who are interested in challenging children to learn, who can identify with the disadvantaged, who are adventurous enough to work with new materials and new methods, who are professionally dedicated to teaching and humanely dedicated to the welfare of all America's children. It has been said that the American people are a "doing people." Here is a task ready at hand to test the validity of this assertion.

What Harvest Will We Reap? 7

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The elementary school is the major agency for guiding the young child through crucial years toward independence and autonomy. Educational growth emanates from an internal source, but optimal climate and conditions are essential if human potential is to be fulfilled. A negative climate and adverse conditions penalize the individual and society through the loss in undeveloped human potential. In addition, a human being is damaged by feelings of distrust, dependence, and inadequacy, attitudes which may be the harvest of the elementary years (Erikson, 1950). The elementary school, therefore, should revitalize and stimulate all community resources to foster conditions for optimum growth and to exclude adverse conditions.

The school environment must meet the child's changing needs during sequential stages from early childhood to later childhood and early pubescence. To do this the curriculum must provide sequential and enriching experiences at crucial developmental stages.

Understanding oneself. Deeper insights in understanding oneself and others are challenging throughout life's tasks. The young child has a particular need to know himself. Unless he possesses certain information about himself, confusion and misunderstanding result.

Anna Freud (1962) believes that young children misunderstand and have inadequate or inaccurate information in at least three factors, (a) the child's time sense, (b) his ideas about physical growth, and (c) his confusions regarding sexual development. The young child has limited tolerance for time; if he does not enjoy the activity, time drags. If the situation is not restricting, he removes himself. If the situation is confining, he must stay with it; what else can he do? Physical growth and sexual development are complex processes but of vital concern to the five-year-old in relation to what he needs to understand about himself. Study trips to enjoy animals and their young and opportunities to observe new babies and their care will aid the child in substituting reality for interpretations woven out of his wishes, fears, and fantasies.

The understanding teacher is aware of common misunderstandings and prevents the child from suffering such damaging feelings as considering school a banishment from home, or needed surgical operations as an attack on his body, or every school day as a never-ending time when one's only duty is to satisfy the teacher.

A teacher who is identifying with the children makes supportive responses. On her first day of kindergarten, Kathy asks, "When will my mother come?" and the teacher replies, "You'd like her to come soon?" The response reflects support for the child's feelings. The more frequent adult reply, "She'll be here in about an hour," has little meaning for the five-year-old and may increase his anxiety and fear.

Curriculum activities and materials can be modified to induce desirable behavior changes. The kindergarten teachers of the Mt. Diablo School District in California reported that boys were assuming nonsignificant roles in their play. Questions were raised about the causes, and discussion centered on what to do about it. Boys lacked opportunities for identification with fathers and their work. When materials such as conductor's caps, painter's aprons, and carpenter's tools were provided to aid boys in their identification with the masculine sex, the children's increased sense of the importance of the father's role was reflected in their play.

Situations and procedures which make children better human beings are often described in tenuous or vague generalizations. Cross sections comparable to medical biopsies from actual class records are more revealing and susceptible to analyses (French, 1961). In subtle ways the teacher's response to each child may bolster or threaten his growth in independence.

Increasing independence and autonomy.

1. Setting: Social studies—fifth grade.
   Teacher: I am going to use the board to write on. Eric, will you move your map? (Eric doesn't repond; children laugh.)

Teacher: He was looking for some good questions for our program.
Comment: Child does not hear teacher's request. With an empathetic remark, the teacher fosters self- and group acceptance.

2. Setting: Second grade—Teacher is giving out cookies to her class.
   Teacher: Take one cookie. There aren't enough for each of us to have two. (Each child does so, except for one frail little girl who takes two.)
   Melinda: That's all right. She is little. (Later) Besides they stuck together.
   Comment: A child assumes the supportive role for a more dependent child.

Decreasing independence and autonomy.

1. Setting: Sixth grade—a discussion of football.
   Teacher: (To boy) You know you'd be better off if you would wear tennis shoes instead of those big heavy boots. (Children laugh.)
   Teacher: It's dry weather now and those are farmer's boots.
   Comment: The teacher criticizes and ridicules the child. The children's laughter reinforces the teacher's rejection.
2. Setting: Fourth grade—research reports.
   Stephen: I read that the early Spanish pueblos, where there was an epidemic of smallpox, had a terrible stink.
   Teacher: I don't believe that was true, but there may have been some psychological feeling about it.
   Comment: The teacher has censored, judged, and rejected the child's product. Is the information untrue?

Identifying the nutritive climate. The elementary school provides a nutritive climate when physical and psychological criteria are fulfilled. The use of time and space and beauty and order are elements in a nutritive climate. Different work areas are planned and equipped to meet specific needs—an indoor-outdoor space is needed; a place for noisy and a place for quiet activity; a place for construction and a place for books. Furniture is arranged in varying patterns depending upon the activity. Openness is provided for movement from place to place. Storage areas are accessible to the child so that he can be independent in using and caring for materials. Supplies and equipment are carefully selected and varied and are plentiful and appropriate for the children.

Minor constructional changes can sometimes effect major behavioral changes. A ramp, replacing three steps, changed the way one group of kindergartners used their outdoor space. Wheel toys and heavy objects were movable. Children desirous of more freedom and motor activity were able to control their behavior independently.

The perceptive teacher fosters a nutritive climate by providing balance, flexibility, order, and limits in the use of time and space. Balance is used in the broadest terms to mean balance of first-hand experiences with vicarious experiences; physical with intellectual activities; arts and music with science and mathematics; individual with group activities; and quiet study with general discussion activities. If the extensive requirements for balance are not met, some children may never know their greatest talents. Those who do but find no opportunity to enjoy them may leave school at the earliest opportunity to develop their talents.

When the teacher sets clearly defined limits, the child's social impulses are reinforced or, if needed, deterred. One teacher said, "On sunny days we play with this wagon in the patio." Subsequently she asked, "Do we play with the wagon today?" thus reminding the children and encouraging self-control.

Interwoven with the physical elements of a nutritive climate are dynamic interacting relationships. These relationships emerge when activities are cooperatively planned and children work together in achieving common goals, when open communication facilitates interaction between individuals and groups, and when relationships among individuals are supportive, friendly, and accepting.

Contrarily, a destructive climate exists if activities are highly competitive and structured personally and exclusively by the teacher; if communication is limited, controlled, and dominated by the teacher; and if individuals are criticized, isolated, rejected, or ignored. Each and every teacher who wants to promote optimum learning for children should study the quality of the climate he fosters.

Fostering a nutritive climate.

1. Setting: Fourth grade—social studies discussion.
   Teacher: Mark, Cristy is waiting for you.
   Comment: The teacher considers the children's time valuable.
2. Setting: Talking with a group using papier mâché.

Teacher: I think if you get your hands into it—you may think it feels terrible at first, but you can always wash your hands.

Comment: Teacher encourages the fearful child and discourages negative feelings about the activity.

3. Setting: Sixth grade—individual conferences with pupils. One boy is out of his seat, wandering around. Other children are working.

Teacher: Have you finished your arithmetic?

Boy: No.

Teacher: (Friendly but firmly) We must all finish by 2:30.

Comment: Teacher fosters a working climate for the group by supporting their standards.

STIMULATING INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

When a child is curious, enthusiastic, and self-propelled in learning, he probably has enjoyed other such activities in the past, has met success frequently and failure infrequently, and someone he likes takes pride in his accomplishments. He has a personal commitment to learning the skill or information, has had some part in the selection and the structure, and may have hit upon ways which make learning easy for him. If aid has been given, it was regulated as to amount and timing. The teacher gave help when it was needed and did not give too much. Practice has been varied and pleasant, and pacing has been adjusted to his individual tempo. Usually the learner's product, skill, or expression has been consistently valued by someone whose approval he values, and the learner has learned to evaluate his accomplishment.

Too many children have a set toward learning different from the one described. When failures for the child accumulate in the kindergarten, first, second, and third grades, the avenues for learning at school are finally closed. Failing children generally become preoccupied only with their own agendas for enduring each school day.

An open structure of learning frees and stimulates intelligence in various ways. Because the framework is incomplete the child becomes involved personally and is challenged to make decisions, to think, to choose alternatives, to correct mistakes, and to make his own evaluation.

A closed structure presents a complete, ready-made plan to the child. The structure, whether that of the teacher or the text, prescribes precisely each step. The answer is either right or wrong, and the product is evaluated by the teacher.

Exercises in which the child writes the one word to fill the blank or checks the one right word from a list represents closed structure for learning. The learner has little opportunity for using or practicing the higher cognitive skills of organizing, synthesizing, contrasting, or generalizing. Rather he has practice in identifying facts, memorizing, recalling, and guessing what the tester wants.

Open structure is shown by the following first-grade learning activity (Elementary Curriculum, 1963): "Draw the *place* where you live." This request by the teacher sets an emotional tone which aids the child in feeling esteem for his family and knowing and accepting different modes of living. "Draw the *people* who live with you" avoids the inference of degradation for children regardless of the membership that comprises each family.

Elementary children need help in learning to appraise their performance and in developing confidence that they do some things well. Children in the middle grades appraise other children quite accurately as to appearance, athletic skill, reading competence, and personal traits but they have a tendency to exaggerate their own inadequacies. The examples below reflect open structure, utilizing the peer group in learning, and ways of developing self-appraisal. These are examples showing how creative teachers free learning.

Freeing learning capacity.

1. Setting: First grade—changing calendar.
   Teacher: Can anyone tell me what month to put up next?
   Katherine: February. (Selects printed word.)
   Teacher: How did you know that said "February"?
   Katherine: It sounded like it.
   Teacher: Little by little, sounds are working for you, aren't they?
   Comment: Open structure—teacher makes it possible for the child to volunteer or not to volunteer as he chooses. The child experiences success and praise and is helped to accept the fact that learning takes time.
2. Setting: A second-grade writing lesson.
   Teacher: Look at your row of "j's" and circle the best one.
3. Setting: Writing reports—sixth grade.
   Teacher: Now what do you think you could do to improve this?

Larry: Write it over.

Teacher: All right, I think you could make it neater.

Larry: Yeah.

Teacher: You might try skipping lines in between.

4. Setting: Barbara, having completed an oral report, is answering questions of class members. She gives an inaccurate answer to a child's question.

Teacher: Barbara, will you review the first part of your report to see what you said? Just read it over silently to yourself.

Teacher: Now do you think you gave Terry a good answer?

Barbara: No.

Teacher: Why not?

Comment: Both the second-grade child and the sixth-grade child in examples 2 and 3 are proficient in appraising their own competencies in writing. If errors are to be corrected, it is to the point to permit the child concerned to make the correction if he can do so.

5. Setting: Fourth grade—research reports. One group begins.

Aaron: Not a thing we read was any good. Our book didn't tell us anything.

Janet: Everything we were looking for wasn't there.

Tom: (Who belongs to another group) Did you read the introduction? That's where we found a lot of our information.

Comment: The peer group is assuming responsibility for learning sometimes assumed only by the teacher.

The following are examples of experiences which restrict learning and decrease intelligence.

Restricting learning capacity.

1. Setting: Sixth grade—explaining answers in arithmetic.

Teacher: What's wrong with that fraction (7/4)?

Deborah: It's upside down.

Teacher: What have you been doing this morning, Deborah? (Class laughs.) Will you explain it to her, Tom? (Tom gives short explanation.)

Teacher: (Continues) This talks about sevenths. This talks about quarters. Better pay attention next time, Deborah.

Teacher: Take the next problem, John. We'd better explain to Deborah how we got it.

Comment: Teacher restricts child's learning by emphasizing her inadequacy. No help is given in diagnosing need or furnishing concrete fractional materials to count.

2. Setting: Fifth grade—defining, syllabifying, and accenting words.

Teacher: (At board) Where does the accent go, Sharon?

Sharon: On the second syllable, im*PU*dent.

Teacher: It's this way, isn't it Sharon?(Teacher writes im pu *DENT*. (No child calls attention to the error.)

Comment: This class is labeled an accelerated fifth grade. Why do the children ignore the teacher's error?

When teachers know as much as it is possible to know about learning and the learner and confidently use procedures for freeing learning capacity, children's enthusiasm and energy for learning can be kept alive and expanded. Certain principles are basic:

Open structure frees learning; closed structure restricts learning.

Open communication and interaction free learning.

Closed rigid domination of communication restricts learning.

Cooperative endeavor and common goals free learning.

Supportive and friendly relations within a nutritive climate free learning.

Isolation, avoidance, competition, and rejection restrict learning.

Recent national emphasis upon multiple programs for educational improvement challenges educators to redefine and reappraise goals. The provision of a nutritive climate and the adult encouragement out of which children's independence and autonomy emerge is imperative; to create and stimulate intelligence by operational procedures which free and expand the capacity to learn is our heritage and responsibility.

Parents Can Help Prevent School Failure 8

Ralph G. Eckert
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Members of a teachers workshop were discussing the problems of retention and failure. "How can a child fail?" asked a young idealist from the state department of education, with real anguish in his voice. "I can understand a parent failing to send the child to school with the right attitudes or motivation; I can understand how a teacher can fail to motivate the child properly or to adjust his tasks to his level of ability; but HOW CAN A CHILD FAIL? My experience with children is that they are eager to learn and that they do the best they can. How, then, does a child fail?" Twenty years have not dimmed my vivid memory of his face and his concern. As a teacher, I never again gave an "F" without the agonizing feeling that I, too, had failed in some way.

Many school failures could be prevented if kindergarten teachers were able to better recognize the "slow-growing little boys" (and occasional little girls) who are maturing more slowly than most children. Such children often begin to resist school in subtle ways; they feel inadequate and no one enjoys being "low man on the totem pole." They have more illnesses than most (the body's attempt to defend them against defeat), and they have to be made to attend because they don't really enjoy it. The mother of the smallest and youngest boy in the class discussed this same problem with the kindergarten teacher and agreed that the next time the child was "ill," she would tell him that he didn't have to go back to school until he wanted to. He got well quickly and began playing with the other four-year-olds in the neighborhood (he was really only four from a maturational standpoint) and did not again talk about school until near the end of the year when the other children began talking about going to school in the fall. In the fall, he was ready for kindergarten and for reading when he reached first grade. He was probably saved from failure. Many immature children could probably be spared failure, and a sense of failure, by being allowed to stay home the rest of the year unless they really insist on going back.

Other children are prepared for failure by the thoughtless remarks of parents. "I'm not surprised she's having difficulty learning to read the way they teach it here," complained a young mother in the presence of her second grader. "I guess he comes by it naturally," grinned the father, trying to laugh off his son's failure. "I flunked twice myself, and the second time I just stayed home and helped Pop on the farm." "You won't think you're so smart after those teachers get through with you," an irate mother threatened.

Schools now realize the importance of preparing the child for happy and successful experiences in school. Some operate preschool parent-child nursery schools; some prepare little brochures for parents of preschoolers; James Hymes has an excellent public affairs pamphlet on preparing the child for school. The most important learnings of the kindergarten may be, "My teacher likes me." "I can do everything the teacher asks me to do." "It is more fun when we all help put things away."

We know, too, that children, whose parents have read to them interesting stories which they have enjoyed, have learned to like books and look forward to being able to read to themselves and younger brothers and sisters. A child with a big *listening* vocabulary learns to read much more readily than a child with a limited vocabulary. The child who has had many rich experiences visiting zoos, farms, cities, crossing rivers, mountains, and fertile valleys finds the words on the printed page much more meaningful than the child with limited experience. How hard it is to learn the word *elevator* if one has never ridden in one. How quickly a little boy will learn the word *carburetor* after he has helped daddy work on the car and knows what a carburetor is.

A closer working relationship between parents and teachers—the important "others" in the life of every child—would benefit many children. Parents do the best they can, but by the time they understand what a seven-year-old is like, he is eight. Teachers, too, do the best they can, but by the time they really get to understand Johnny and have learned to work with him more effectively, the year ends and he moves on to another teacher, who tries to get to know Johnny and 30 other youngsters. Parents know a great deal about one particular child; teachers know a great deal about children of a certain age. Why don't parents and teachers work more closely together, when they both want the same thing—to help children grow up and learn to become fine and competent adults?

I once opened a conference attended by parents, teachers, and administrators by asking this question. After a few minutes, we settled down to analyzing and listing the fears that made the natural cooperation of parents, teachers, and administrators so difficult. In the next hour we filled the blackboards with the fears of parents, teachers, and administrators, of which I shall list only a few:

1. Parents fear they will make a poor impression on the teacher because they have less education than the teacher and this may affect their child negatively.
2. Parents fear that the teacher may become angry at them and take it out on the child in some way.
3. Parents fear that the teacher may find out about conflicts in the home and blame the parents for the child's problems.
4. Parents fear that everything told to the teacher may not be kept in confidence.
5. Parents may fear, or be hostile toward, teachers because of their own unhappy school experiences.
6. Parents fear *they* will be criticized for their child's behavior.
7. Parents fear criticism for things they feel they can do nothing about.
8. Parents fear that they may be asked to help with homework and, not knowing the newer methods, that they may confuse the child or be thought ignorant.
9. Parents fear an unscheduled home visit; the teacher may catch them at their worst.
10. Parents fear that any suggestions they make may be taken as criticism.

Teachers, too, have fears:

1. Teachers fear being considered authorities on education; they seldom feel they know enough and are afraid that parents may find this out.
2. Teachers fear that parents will not keep information about the child confidential, that they may broadcast it to the detriment of child or teacher.
3. Teachers fear that parents may become highly emotional or antagonistic and that they will not be able to handle the situation wisely.

4. Teachers fear that parents may resent something told them in confidence and attack the teacher in conversation with other parents or the administration.

5. Teachers fear that parents may use something said by the teacher as a basis for punishing or pressuring the child.

6. Teachers fear that parents may disagree with them, go directly to the principal with a distorted story, and that he will not support them.

7. Teachers fear that parents may have ideas about education with which they cannot agree and are not sure they will know how to handle the situation.

Some of these fears are probably valid, and some are groundless. We know that it is good for groups of teachers and groups of parents to discuss them, get them out and think about them rather than keep them inside and just feel them. Once we become more aware of our unconscious fears—those crippling emotions which make us defensive or aggressive rather than cooperative, hostile rather than friendly, rigid rather than sensitive—we find it easier to seek the help of others in our search for greater understanding of this unique human being for whom we feel responsible as parent or teacher. Both parents and teachers groups have found that frank discussion of these fears tends to lessen them, and they then enter the parent-teacher conference with more confidence in themselves, in others, and in the results of their joint search for understanding.

More and more schools are scheduling parent-teacher conferences as part of the educational process. The most common pattern seems to be a parent conference in November, after the teacher has gotten to know the child and been able to assess his study and behavior patterns sufficiently to be able to give the parent an evaluation of the child's progress to date. The teacher probably also has some questions in his mind which he hopes to discuss with the parent. Establishment of a good working relationship at this time makes it possible for parents and teachers to agree on some specific plans to help a child who has problems and makes it easy to plan follow-up conferences when needed. Following a report card at mid-year, a second parent conference is scheduled for March; a final conference is held at the end of the year.

Note that these conferences are held with all parents, not just with those who have children in trouble. Guiding the child's learning experiences is thus a joint responsibility, and the likelihood of failure is thus greatly reduced. Teachers are advised in preparing for each conference to find some things about the child or his achievements to praise. This promotes a good feeling on the part of the parents—who see the child's successes as theirs—and this good feeling is reflected back to the teacher, the school, and the child at home. Children thrive and *learn* best in a sea of good feelings. "Find something to praise or appreciate every day" is a prescription for parents and teachers which seems most frequently to turn underachievers into achievers, apathetic and defeated children into children willing to try again, and normal children into happy and creative human beings. Changing a self-concept from "no one likes me" to "someone likes me," from "I'm no good" to "I'm not so bad" may be the most important learning that takes place in a given day, week, or year.

Parent conferences can be reassuring to parents, who in turn can be reassuring to children. "For sooner or later, the man who wins is the man who thinks he can" is familiar to most parents and teachers. Fears are very contagious, and nothing causes failure like the fear of failure unrelieved by the reassurance of an adult who cares. Parents and teachers can say, "Let's try it again; we can do it, can't we?" Children try hardest for those who believe their best will be good enough.

Make your suggestions in question form, such as "Do you think it would help if . . . ?" "Have you ever tried . . . ?" Above all, avoid trying to appliqué the parent and child's future upon your own past; never say, "If I were you, I would. . . ." If you were the parent or the child you would be doing what they are doing, and they may only be frustrated trying to do what seems so natural to you with your lifetime of experiences. But asking the parent or child whether they have ever tried so and so gives them the feeling you respect them and thus makes them respect themselves a bit more. This makes them a bit more creative and imaginative, and they may come up with something that will really work for them. Encourage parents to have more fun with their children. The finest thing they can do for their children is to enjoy them, at all ages.

Where a child has a number of problems, consider only one at a time, if possible—the one about which the parent is most likely to be able to do something. Ask the parent for suggestions as to what he or she thinks you can do about this problem and, if possible, agree on a joint approach. Plan future conferences within a week or two to follow up on results of your approach. Usually some progress will be noted by one or the other, and this reassures both. All we have any right to expect is some improvement, although sometimes minor miracles occur when a child, who has had mostly criticism, starts experiencing praise. (Praise is *deserved* appreciation; flattery is an attempt at manipulation.) Another problem can then be tackled, with suggestions by both as to the kind of experiences most likely to result in success. Remember, no child is hopeless as long as one adult has hope for him and is able to express that hope by planning and appreciating achievable successes.

But what can we do if the parents we most need to see do not come for the scheduled conference? Some of the most successful home calls reported have been those home visits to the parents who didn't come to the conferences. They had been afraid or hostile, but their attitude changed when the teacher cared enough to come to their home and said, in effect, "I need your help in order to help your child." One sixth-grade teacher reported that, after making home calls on all who did not come for the conference, the parents not only came for follow-up conferences but they began attending PTA meetings. He noted a definite improvement in the children's attitude, too, because "he had cared enough" about the children whose parents, other teachers had said, didn't care enough about their own children to come for a conference. They did care, but they were afraid of teachers and schools because of experiences they had had as children.

A high school dean of girls, after fruitless conferences with three girls and/or the parents in her office, arranged an evening conference in the home with both parents and each girl. The statement, "I need your help if I am to help your daughter have a more pleasant high school experience and get the kind of education that will help her as a woman and mother," brought a real effort at cooperation by both parents and girls. It is never too late to change. One of the fathers had been very antagonistic. As the dean *listened*, she sensed a deep hurt and anger. She asked about the high school he had attended. He had attended this same high school, 25 years ago, until he had been expelled in his junior year. Finally she said, "You must have been a very unhappy boy to have gotten into that kind of trouble. What was the situation at home?" "Oh, I'm one of those divorce orphans; my parents separated when I was a sophomore." Schools were different then; no dean had called at his home to talk with him and his parents. She listened, sympathized, and hoped counselors and deans today were better trained and more understanding. His daughter's behavior changed because his attitude changed.

Finally, can we teach parents to be better counselors to their children by being better counselors to them? Can we suggest the kinds of questions that help children learn to express their real feelings and, thus, come to understand themselves better by explaining themselves to others?

Sydney M. Jourard in *The Transparent Self* insists that we only understand that part of ourselves we have explained to someone else. And we only explain ourselves to someone we feel sure will accept us and what we tell them. Children can learn to verbalize their feelings and explain themselves if parents will just listen. One of the best times is after the children are in bed and we sit down on the edge of the bed and say, "Like to have me rub your back?" They almost always do. We can then ask, "Well how did things go today?" and then LISTEN. Parents who have tried this have been amazed at what sometimes comes out. It probably works best with adolescents when they find it hard to reveal things they don't like about themselves, if they have been doing it a few years and have learned the good feeling that follows talking out a problem. This is also a way in which fathers can express affection for teenage sons at that stage when they still need to feel loved—but find it difficult to admit.

Inexperienced teachers fear to arrange parent conferences; those who have been having parent conferences for a few years usually say, "I wouldn't know how to get along without the help I get from parents. Get them on your side and the problems begin to disappear." A group of young teachers checked, as most valuable of all training, a short six-week course on working with parents which we organized at their request. They read about conferences and transcriptions of actual conferences; we role-played easy, then more difficult, conferences, recording them and discussing better ways of interacting. They faced their first conferences with confidence, and they lost their remaining fears of parents. Teachers colleges could, and probably should, give training and experience in parent conferences to all students as part of their training. Social workers take a course in interviewing, then interview under supervision. Isn't it about time that teachers were trained to consult with parents, so that the parent-teacher team can really function to prevent much school failure and to heighten the achievement and creativity of all children?

Implications for Parent Education 9

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The schools can accomplish their purposes only if parents understand and support them. Most schools are only beginning to face this fact. The school, therefore, explains to parents what it is trying to do for their children and seeks their cooperation in achieving these aims. The real task of the school, as Earl C. Kelley has pointed out, is "to build better people." To attain this objective, home and school must work together.

Most parents have a deep interest in their children and want to do what is best for them. In the growing-up process, they are the major guides of boys and girls. From the crucial years before school to long after the school has relinquished responsibility, each son and daughter remains the child of his parents. Our educational system frequently offers little or no opportunity for parents to acquire the knowledge and understanding that will help them to know their children and to know themselves as parents.

Every school should offer programs of continuing education for parents. Where should parents turn to learn about their children, if not to the school? Parents may develop their own parent education programs, with professional guidance and assistance from school personnel (Kawin, n.d.).

While many parents respond eagerly to educational opportunities, great numbers are "hard to reach." This is especially true of parents who are themselves educationally disadvantaged. To enlist the interest of all parents, therefore, the school needs to offer a variety of programs. These range from the meeting

Support at home for learning.

using film, speaker, or demonstration to attract the "hard to reach" to study-discussion groups of fathers and mothers who seek continuing education in parenthood as their children progress from infancy to adulthood. Programs should provide knowledge of child development, understanding of children's changing needs at various ages, and realization of the changing roles of parents as their children grow older (Kawin, 1963).

In whatever program the school makes available to parents, one of the greatest benefits lies in the association of parents and school personnel. Urgent need is apparent for breakthroughs in the wall that has too long separated parents and teachers. When warm, friendly contacts are made through joint participation in group discussions, many of the fears of parents and teachers, which Ralph G. Eckert lists as drawbacks to parent-teacher cooperation, would never arise.

Group programs for parents can pave the way for the individual parent-teacher conferences. Through study-discussion groups which span periods of child development, a parent can keep "a jump ahead" so that he knows what to expect before his child reaches that stage. Helpful attitudes of parents which apply to all children can be learned in groups, making it possible for the school counselor to devote his conferences to individual needs.

Any program the school offers parents should include opportunities to explain the school's objectives and the methods used to help children achieve them. Parents need help in understanding that every child is unique. Because of these individual differences, all children cannot be equally successful in scholastic attainments. Parents and teachers together need to recognize that a child can succeed only if his goals lie within the possibility of his attainment.

SECURITY AND ADEQUACY

Every child must feel secure and adequate in order to develop a healthy personality. What wise parents and teachers seek for every child is a sound balance between desires, aspirations, and ambitions, on the one hand, and abilities, opportunities, and performance, on the other. Each individual should set for himself, or with the guidance of others, goals which can be attained by him. In a democracy, every individual must have opportunity to make his greatest possible contribution. His best, whatever it may be, should be accepted as adequate. Every person can thus feel secure and adequate. Everyone feels secure when he is accepted, when he belongs. He feels adequate when he feels equal to the role he is expected to fill.

Obviously, it is more difficult for parents who are themselves disadvantaged in any way—socioeconomically, educationally, or culturally—to provide a home where children can feel secure and adequate. Special effort is required of parents to help a disadvantaged child with any mental or physical disability to feel secure and adequate. If the family is a member of a minority group toward which the larger society has discriminatory attitudes, the whole family must struggle against feelings of insecurity and inferiority. Special understanding and help from the school are essential for such families.

All feelings of inferiority or inadequacy are, of course, not necessarily bad for us, nor should we try to protect ourselves or our children from all failure. If one feels inadequate in a situation, those very feelings may serve as a challenge or motivation to greater effort and improvement. A child's failure in his first efforts to hammer a nail, to learn to swim, or to ride a bicycle do not discourage him but stimulate him to try again. If not overwhelming, initial failures may make him try harder. With wise guidance, children can turn their experiences of failure to constructive account. Such experiences are quite different, however, from failure stamped by an external authority, such as a teacher, when the learner does not understand the reasons for failure and so interprets it as a judgment of his personal worth and adequacy.

Especially for children, feelings of adequacy must outweigh those of inadequacy, and experiences of success must overbalance those of failure. Eventually each must be able to make honest and accurate appraisals of himself and of others, to accept those limitations which cannot be overcome, and to feel adequate within these limitations. Adequacy is closely related to security, that is, to self-acceptance and acceptance of others.

Many parents find it difficult to accept the limitations of their children; indeed most parents find it even more difficult to accept their children's limitations than their own. They need help in developing a constructive point of view. Parents who have themselves been unsuccessful in school and in life often accept their children's limitations, but in a way destructive to their children's development. "School learning is not for us" is the way in which they may accept a low estimate of their own and their children's abilities, thus discouraging their children from trying. They may see the school as a symbol of all the wrongs they have suffered; then their expressed hostility toward the school is reflected in their children's antagonistic and resistant attitudes toward school, attitudes which block learning.

Such parents and children are difficult to reach through any parent education program, but this challenge is one which the school must not evade. Work is urgently needed to develop materials and methods in constructive parent education programs which build better attitudes and improve home-school relationships.

PROBLEM-SOLVING ATTITUDES AND METHODS

Parents and teachers recognize that the major purpose of education is teaching children how to think and to solve problems. Living involves continuous problem solving. A mature, responsible citizen in a free society must acquire problem-solving attitudes and methods. He must learn to take little problems in stride, hardly aware that he is meeting and solving them as he lives from day to day. Big and important problems must be consciously recognized and faced. A mature person learns to find them challenging and derives satisfaction from accomplishment as he works toward successful solutions.

The person with problem-solving attitudes and skills is not defeated by failure. He has confidence that if one method does not work, he can search for another. He does not persist in futile methods of attack but modifies methods when they do not solve the problem. He knows that if a problem ultimately proves unsolvable, he can learn to live with it.

Many schools have tended to stress the acquisition of knowledge rather than the ability to solve problems as a major goal, with the result that many people tend to seek escape rather than to face problems. Knowledge and problem solving are not alternatives; both are important and supplement each other. Characteristic of families of lower socioeconomic status and minority ethnic and racial groups are feelings of helplessness in regard to destiny, even to decisions controlling their personal lives. However, these parents can be helped to recognize the decisions they can make, to assume responsibility for them, and to guide their children to do likewise.

THE PROBLEM OF FAILURE

Parents need special help in regard to the problem of failure. Not only does this apply to parents of children who encounter failure in school but to all parents. Everyone seeks success, but everyone has to face failure at some time. Everyone, therefore, needs to develop mentally healthful ways of reacting to failure, to be able to take failure in stride. Parents should be given opportunities to recognize the importance of early successes and the constructive use of mistakes. They can then apply these general principles in guiding children when they encounter failure. Parents who have acquired such a point of view will be prepared to react more helpfully in teacher-parent conferences concerning children's problems.

Mentally Healthful Attitudes Toward Failure

Some failures are due to forces over which the individual has little control. Events that could not be foreseen or could not be prevented may make it impossible to succeed in an undertaking. Persons whose cooperation was necessary may fail to do their part. Whatever the causes of failure, everyone must learn to take them in stride. Sometimes one may have a chance to try again. If not, the failure must be accepted with as much equanimity as possible, and the individual must turn elsewhere in his continuing search for success.

Situations occur in which the individual may be largely responsible for failure. He may not have planned carefully, begun soon enough, or worked sufficiently hard. Mentally healthful attitudes toward such failures require that the causes be faced and used as a learning experience to build for future success.

The failure may have to be recognized as due to causes that cannot be eliminated. Any individual may fail because of limitations within himself that he must accept because he cannot overcome them. Difficult as it is to face and accept one's inadequacies, a healthy mental life requires one to derive feelings of adequacy from goals that are attainable.

It Begins Before School

In some ways the preschool years are the most important learning years for the child. The developmental tasks which he is expected to accomplish during his first five years make great demands upon the child, but they represent achievements in the process of normal development toward which all children strive. A child's efforts to acquire basic skills—such as learning to walk, to talk, to feed himself, to manipulate objects, and to relate himself to other people and the world around him—can all be a source of gratification. In these earliest years all such efforts should be encouraged, and failures ignored.

After the first two years, however, parents cannot protect a child from all experiences of failure. A preschool child's failures in his first efforts to dress himself, build a tower of blocks, complete a picture puzzle, or accomplish some other feat that interests him do not discourage him. If parents encourage his attempts, no matter how limited the results may be, the child gets satisfaction from his efforts and gradually develops self-confidence.

As he grows older, the child himself will inevitably recognize his failure. Wise parental guidance will help him face his limitations. Studies have been made of the reactions of nursery school children to failure situations. Some cry; some go into temper tantrums; some get discouraged and refuse to make further effort; others blame persons or objects instead of admitting their limitations; and still others try to bluff their way through. Relatively few take their failures in stride, expecting a chance to try again or turning elsewhere for success.

Research has demonstrated that young children who show undesirable reactions toward failure can be helped through the guidance of nursery school teachers to develop more constructive ways of meeting failure. Parents can learn to give such guidance. Many schools have already extended parent education programs downward to include the preschool period.

If the failure involves a problem that is not beyond the child's ability, guidance can make any activity a significant learning experience. When a young child tries to build a tower of blocks and finds that it collapses, he can be encouraged to continue trying so that he develops perseverance. If he can discover the weakness in his building and find the remedy, he has learned a problem-solving method which he can apply to other problems. He has learned to find cause and through failure to build success.

Basic patterns of success and failure and of reactions to failure are established in the preschool years, and these patterns are determined chiefly by parents. Centers where parents can learn constructive ways of guiding young children should be available. In middle and upper class communities this can be done by extending parent education programs to include parents of infants and preschool-age children. In neighborhoods of economically and educationally deprived families, urgent need exists to establish school-sponsored nursery schools and day care centers to provide educational programs for parents as well as constructive experiences for children. Without such provisions, the children are inevitably disadvantaged educationally when they enter school.

The School Years

The school cannot hope to enlist the cooperation of parents if it takes the all too prevalent attitude of blaming the parents for their children's inadequacies. The only result of such an attitude is likely to be that parents, in retaliation, blame the school for their children's failures to learn.

In school the child is trying for the first time to keep pace with a whole group of his own age seeking to accomplish the same developmental tasks. Unlike the earlier skills which practically all normal children eventually acquire, these scholastic skills are affected greatly by individual differences, and all children cannot be expected to acquire them at the same rate or to the same degree. Feelings of inadequacy, due to inability to keep pace with his group during early school years, may cause a child to suffer from feelings of inferiority throughout school and even in later life. Parents need to understand this, so that they will give support and encouragement.

Schools today provide for individual differences. They recognize that a wide range of achievement must be expected in any grade. Parents, too, must learn to expect this. The child who does his best is a successful child, even though his school achievement may be low. The great challenge to the school and the home is to try to find out what are the potentialities of each child and give him a feeling of success when he does his best. In the course of his development, his potentialities may change; therefore, they should be rechecked from time to time.

The school should help parent groups to understand the concept of readiness, beginning with readiness for first grade. They can be helped to avoid putting pressure on a child to learn what he is not yet ready to learn.

In our competitive society parents find it difficult to avoid pressuring their children. Many fathers and mothers hope their child will be "the best" in his group, or if not the best, at least in the top 10 percent. This is to be expected when learning is valued as a symbol of prestige and status rather than for itself. Parents need to be helped to develop values and guiding principles which give perspective.

Many disadvantaged parents are apathetic or resistant to education for a variety of reasons. Because their own school experience has not been significant, they do not value education greatly, do not know how to reinforce the child's school efforts or encourage his desire to learn. Children from such homes should receive especially stimulating encouragement from the school.

Throughout the elementary school years parents need to know what the school and the community expect children to accomplish during each age period. They need to know whether their child is capable of accomplishing these tasks. Each child's progress, his success or failure, should be judged in terms of three different standards of comparison:

1. What has been his progress in relation to his capacity and previous accomplishment?
2. What is his progress in relation to the attainments of his group or class?
3. What is his progress in relation to the achievement of children of his age, nation-wide?

The most important of these is the first—whether the child is working up to his capacity and has made progress. To compete against one's own past record of achievement is healthful competition. However, the child is a member of a school group. He cannot help but know, as he grows older, how his performance in various activities compares with others. Parents also want to know how their child stands scholastically in relation to his group. Schools should help all parents to use such information wisely and constructively for the child's welfare and happiness.

The reason for the third standard of comparison is that a child who is superior or inferior in capacity or performance in his local group may not be either when compared with the larger world. In a class or a school where most children have more than average intelligence, a child who is average will actually seem below average. When he gets into the broader society he will not be at the disadvantage of comparison with a highly selected group.

When boys and girls reach preadolescence, success and failure to them is increasingly dependent upon the standards and values of their peers. Outstanding success in scholastic achievement may not have group approval. This affects the preadolescent's attitude and often calls for parent understanding. It also challenges the school. Life is more than academic achievement. All sorts of abilities and talents can be utilized in a democratic, free society, and the personality of every individual may make its own unique contribution.

PARENT EDUCATION—A CHALLENGE TO THE SCHOOL

Parents can help to prevent school failures if the school does not fail them. All parents can be helped to learn the facts of child development so that they know what can reasonably be expected of most children at various ages. New knowledge about children is constantly emerging from research. Only through continuing education and guided observation of their own and other children can parents keep abreast of these new frontiers.

The findings of research in child development have value when their implications are understood and applied to the education and guidance of children. Parents and teachers must both be actively involved in this process. Parents must be able to express their beliefs and their doubts, to ask questions, and to disagree without feeling that they will incur the displeasure of the educators to whom they turn for guidance. Parents need to feel that they can discuss any matter of concern to them as parents and expect to be given help in finding answers to their problems. In the last analysis, each parent must decide for himself how to rear his child and how to handle the everyday problems that arise in the lives of all families.

The School Within the Community

10

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Some children come to school from neighborhood islands shut off from the mainstreams of American life. Whether city slums or undeveloped sections of town, the symbols of ambition and affluence are missing. A hundred clues—unpaved streets, lack of street lamps or sidewalks, peeling paint or rotting wood, few parks or small playgrounds—all signal neglect. Those living in more privileged sections appear aloof or unaware. An atmosphere of apathy, discouragement, or resentment often results.

In such a neighborhood, the school offers the best promise of leadership. If the staff is sensitive rather than impatient, it can initiate activities through which residents may help themselves and better their way of living.

Unfortunately such schools, too, are often disadvantaged. Buildings are sometimes poorly maintained and teaching supplies limited. More significantly, inexperienced or uninterested staff may be assigned to such schools. But with a staff recruited because of sensitivity and commitment to the problems of the disadvantaged, the school can bring constructive changes in the lives of children and their families. As a catalyst, the school can help people venture beyond the restrictions of the neighborhood to explore, understand, and enjoy the advantages of the larger community. Teachers and children can begin such projects for community service as fire or traffic safety in which parents and other citizens become involved and eventually assume responsibility.

To accelerate the social learnings of children from disadvantaged neighborhoods, the school staff moves into and becomes an active force within the community.

Existing community influences are used, and the neighborhood's resources are exploited to extend children's learnings. The staff begins with a realistic appraisal of the out-of-school opportunities for learning available to children. Through observing and listening to children, conferring with parents, and studying the community, teachers gain insight into the experiences children have had and what they have already learned. The disadvantaged child does not enter school devoid of experience and learning. His disadvantage lies in the discrepancy between what he has learned and what schools assume that all children have learned. Bewilderment, apathy, and resentment result as a child senses that what he "knows" is disregarded or disparaged and that he is somehow disappointing the teacher. The teacher who understands the realities of a child's life can use its novel and unique aspects in extending his learning and in developing new meanings.

Knowledge of the community enables the staff to identify people who can contribute to children's learning. Many children are unaware of influences in the neighborhood other than their families and the peer group. The achievements of the local businessmen, tradesmen, or civic representatives are often invisible. As the teacher guides the children in studies of their community and invites such adults to classroom discussions, children find new sources of information and interest. Near at hand, they discover adults with whom they can identify more closely than those remote in time or place.

The school also acquaints children with customs and activities typical of modern urban life. Many of these children do not have the experiences and skills which are often taken for granted. Many may have never entered a large department store, ordered a meal at a restaurant, or traveled by rail or air. Beginning with newly familiar experiences, the school seeks to extend children's experiences across town to theaters and concerts, to civic offices and public affairs. Self-respect and confidence increase as a child realizes that he is dealing with new experiences successfully. Attitudes of apathy or hostility may be modified as he recognizes that the outlook of his family and neighborhood does not accurately reflect that of the entire community. In many ways the school enables children to move more comfortably from restricted community pockets to the wider society in which they may develop their full potential.

Physicians, psychologists, social workers, and other specialists working with the staff help children to understand themselves, their environment, and effective ways of managing it. The staff recognizes that the objectives of emotional and social development have high priority in the education of disadvantaged children. Whether the potential of each child will be realized depends upon his feelings of self-respect and his skills in finding his way in a complex technological society. Group and individual conferences are used to develop each child's understanding of himself, his physical growth and health, and his personal development. Classroom and small group discussions guide children in considering their behavior and its effects upon others in the family and peer group. Using personnel from industry, the professions, civil service, and other employments, the school encourages children to explore and consider a wider variety of occupations than they have previously noticed. Techniques of group guidance are used at each grade to identify and deal with problems common to that age.

Conventional notions about where and when teaching takes place are discarded by the community-oriented school. The staff encourages the development of a variety of enriching after-school experiences. Crafts, puppet shows, children's theater, story telling and reading, individual tutoring, supervising study, leadership training, and similar activities may be scattered throughout the neighborhood in libraries, churches, and private homes, as well as in the school itself.

The school in the disadvantaged neighborhood can help to meet the need of all human beings to know one another and to develop mutual respect. Many parents want to help their children but because of their limited schooling do not know how. Like all parents they, too, long to feel pride in their children's accomplishments but often are at a loss to understand anything other than physical prowess. The school that plans displays of children's art and other work, community sings, folk dancing, fiestas, and other family-shared activities enables adults and children to know and appreciate one another in new ways. The school is a center for many adult activities based upon current interests in local or national issues, in improving family living, or in personal development. As parents find new sources of satisfaction in their own lives, they are better able to stimulate and guide their children.

A number of social agencies are generally concerned with the problems of families living in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Too often, these agencies work independently with different aspects of the family's problems. The school can serve as a coordinating agency to ensure that these efforts are expanded more effectively. Because of daily contact with children, the school staff can be helpful in distinguishing between "hard-core" families whose problems are of long standing and those whose problems are marginal. The latter are struggling to gain advantages which will bring new opportunities to their children. Assistance at the right time through the united efforts of the school and the agency may enable the family to become independent and self-directing. It is from these families that, with early intervention, some young people will emerge with significant achievements. Many will lead stable, constructive, and satisfying lives, and very few will become drifters or dropouts.

Children who enter school with inequalities and gaps in previous learnings suffer from environmental handicaps. They are not different from others in the range of their native abilities but in their backgrounds of social experience. Sometimes, mistakenly, the vocabulary and language patterns of these children, their use of aggression, and their diffidence or resistance to the school's efforts have been viewed as symptoms of personal maladjustment. Clinical diagnosis of individual difficulties and remedial recommendations, however, miss their mark for large numbers of these children. The elementary school can fulfill its obligation only through a broad program which builds upon the backgrounds which the children bring to school. Such a plan reaches out into the community to create a group climate which will reinforce and enrich children's learning.

Toward a Program To Prevent Failure

11

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The prevention of failure in the elementary school requires continuous efforts to keep learning open to each child. The child should be recognized as a unique person who brings his own abilities and past experiences to the encounter with learning. The curriculum should present broad and varied experiences suited to the children's interests and needs. Teachers should select methods and materials which ensure each child's involvement with a balance of success.

Administrative arrangements determine the groups in which a child works and plays, the methods of appraising his growth, and the special services available to him and his family in times of stress. These provisions for grouping, for evaluation, and for special help have a massive influence in minimizing each child's chances of failure or in making his failure inevitable.

A program to prevent failure stresses parent conferences and meetings which enable a teacher to discover the important influences in a child's life. A parent's hopes and concerns about his child are taken into account in the school's planning. Parents and teachers collaborate in appraising the direction of each child's progress.

The school is an integral part of the community, using its resources to extend and enrich learning. The staff participates in community activities and works with children, parents, and other citizens on projects for community improvement.

Specialized guidance services alone cannot provide the pervasive "guidance point of view" that will keep a school open to

each child as a person and that will make the school years a massive influence on each child's life. Therefore, guidance is considered an integral part of all education impinging on curriculum and methods, administration, reports to parents, and relations with the community.

The following questions are guides to the examination of school practices which directly affect the prevention of failure. The five sections are not mutually exclusive but merely a convenient way of looking at questions relating to aspects of school life. These questions serve their purpose if they promote a healthy examination of practices that, in the past, have been accepted as sacrosanct.

HOW DOES YOUR SCHOOL LOOK AT CHILDREN?

Does your school—

1. Look at a child as a changing, growing, maturing person who need not be and will not be tomorrow what he is today?
2. Exploit the child's urge to learn by prizing his learning as it is found, whether it be found in small drops or large pools?
3. Recognize symptomatic behavior of children as symptomatic rather than malicious?
4. Look carefully at the differences between boys and girls related to achievement and acceptance in the early grades?
5. Provide many opportunities for all children to express their ideas and feelings?
6. Use tests to diagnose each child's achievement and potential to achieve rather than to label children or data to be filed?
7. Stress strengths on which to build when looking at test results?
8. Search for ways to uncap the spring of creativity in the silent child, the fearful child, the withdrawing child?
9. Recognize that a little extra love and attention can often be enough to "save" a child?
10. Avoid ridicule, sarcasm, and other weapons with which adults can diminish the child in his own eyes and those of his peers?
11. Face the fact that all children have problems some time, while some children live with the same problem every day, all day?

HOW DOES YOUR SCHOOL PLAN CURRICULUM AND SELECT METHODS?

Does your school—

1. Use instructional methods that build self-esteem for children from all cultural subgroups?

2. Adjust curricular experiences to the needs of the community, neighborhood, and individual?

3. Encourage teachers to use criteria other than achievement for groupings within the classroom?

4. Arrange groupings within the school in the light of what children learn from each other as well as what they learn from the teacher?

5. Examine competitive practices in the school as they relate to learning and good guidance practices?

6. Structure a curriculum that builds in opportunities for the child to be an active partner in learning rather than only a receptacle?

HOW DOES YOUR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION ENCOURAGE SOUND PRACTICES?

Does your school—

1. Promote two-way communication between schools where children attend more than one school during the elementary years?

2. Provide teachers with research findings on motivation and help them to apply these findings?

3. Encourage systematic efforts to observe child behavior objectively?

4. See teachers as the most important influence next to parents in building the child's identity, in telling him who and what he is?

5. Make use of consultants from several disciplines in planning a healthy emotional climate within the school?

6. Prize teachers who give of themselves, their hopes, dreams, and triumphs to children?

7. Differentiate guidance responsibilities which can be handled by one teacher, by two teachers working as a team, by teacher and principal, and by teacher and guidance specialist?

8. Schedule classes small enough so teachers have time to diagnose children's needs and to teach children as individuals?

9. Arrange grouping patterns that enable each child to move through the school at his own speed?

HOW DOES YOUR SCHOOL WORK WITH PARENTS AND COMMUNITY?

Does your school—

1. Prepare kindergarten teachers to induct parents into a healthy home-school relationship?

2. Supply continuous in-service education for teachers to build skills in consulting and working with parents?

3. Use procedures of reporting to parents which build children's self-esteem and motivation for continued learning?

4. Interpret test results to parents with concern for the parents' emotional involvement and with recognition of the limitations of test instruments?

5. Provide resources for individual parents and parent groups who wish to learn more about children?

6. Sensitize the community to the facts about children's emotional problems and the need for services to treat them?

7. Utilize community agencies when parents ask for help that the school is unable to furnish?

HOW DOES YOUR SCHOOL HELP CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS?

Does your school—

1. Make resources available for the kindergarten or primary teacher who identifies early a child who may have school problems in the future?

2. Bring together curriculum and guidance personnel as well as present and past teachers when a guidance conference is held concerning a child's problems?

3. Continue to evaluate results and formulate new recommendations, if necessary, after a plan has been made for meeting a child's problems?

4. Provide personnel to counsel with children who need this special help and support?

5. Provide continuity of counseling personnel so the child will feel comfortable with the counselor?

6. Arrange released time for teachers to counsel with parents and other teachers?

7. Prevent chronic problems in a child's life by immediate, temporary help when an acute crisis (death, divorce, new baby) occurs?

8. Look for multiple causes of problem behavior?

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